

# Jerusalem's Women

The Growth and Development of Palestinian  
Women's movement in Jerusalem during the  
British Mandate period (1920s-1940s)

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## Table of Contents

Jerusalem's Women .....	1
Nadia Harhash.....	1
Abstract .....	5
Appreciations .....	7
Abbreviations .....	8
<b>Part One : Research Methodological Outline .....</b>	<b>9</b>
I. Problem Statement and Objectives .....	10
II. Research Tools and Methodology .....	15
III. Boundaries and Limitations.....	19
IV. Literature Review.....	27
<b>Part Two : The Growth and Development of the Palestinian Women's Movement in Jerusalem During the British Mandate (1920s-1940s) .....</b>	<b>33</b>
1. Introduction .....	34
2. The Photo .....	41
4. An Overview of the Political Context.....	47
5. Women Education and Professional Development .....	53
6. The Emergence of Charitable Societies and Rise of Women Movement .....	65
7. Rise of Women's Movement.....	69

8. Women's Writers and their contribution . . . .	93
9. Biographical Appendix of Women Activists	107
10. Conclusion . . . . .	135
11. Bibliography. . . . .	145
Annexes . . . . .	152
III. Photos . . . . .	153
Documents . . . . .	154
(Endnotes) . . . . .	155

## **Abstract**

The research discusses the development of the women's movement in Palestine in the early British Mandate period through a photo that was taken in 1945 in Jerusalem during a meeting of women activists from Palestine with the renowned Egyptian feminist Huda Sha'rawi.

The photo sheds light on the side of Palestinian society that hasn't been well explored or realized by today's Palestinians. It shows women in a different role than a constructed "traditional" or "authentic" one. The photo gives insights into a particular constituency of the Palestinian women's movement: urban, secular-modernity women activists from the upper echelons of Palestinian society of the time, women without veils, contributing to certain political and social movements that shaped Palestinian life at the time and connected with other Arab women activists. Veiling or unveiling of the women is often analyzed through the frames of 'modernity' and 'tradition,' where for modernists unveiling women represents progress and modernity, while the veil becomes the symbolic locus of culture, backwardness and gender discrimination. A shift in the way women dressed indoors and outdoors, publically or privately might indeed be read as saying something about the margin of freedom women had, and hence the contradictions women encounter in the society, but the veil must not be simplistically equated with tradition or religious conservatism. Modernity and education, often represented as vehicles of empowerment, have in fact also had a regulatory and disciplinary effect

on women's lives- they are not a panacea for women's emancipation. Consequently, analyzing women's movement in Palestine as elsewhere, must be set within a wider frame that analyses the politics of modernity, and the rhetoric of binary discourses juxtaposing 'tradition', 'modernity', 'East' and 'West' by different political actors on the ground engaged in processes of modern state building.

Palestinians have been doomed to face the challenges of liberation. That time was no exception. This exploration delves into those activities, and the roles women helped to form in that period.

Women's roles were part of a collective forgetfulness due to the brutal decades of the end of the Ottoman era—a forgetfulness that resulted in a total amnesia regarding real acts of that era. When people remember stories of forced militarization and collective punishment, massacre, poverty, and illnesses, such negative aspects overshadow the reality of the life of that era.

Hence, the thesis attempts to explore how the political disputes, national consensus affected the development of an effective social feminist agenda.

The thesis will examine the question of whether the rise of women's movement was part of the rising modernist middle or /and elite class, due to the natural development of the period, including education, political activism, etc. within the mandate period; or it was as well, a collective awareness within the society and its different classes.

## **Appreciations**

To my daughters, who insist on inspiring me about a future that can be rewarding through the resilience of a nation whose torch they hold proudly—the power a woman of tomorrow can enhance in the footsteps of those women who marked our history in many ways with a dream of a homeland.

And to Dr. Salim Tamari, for the invaluable support, and for a great voyage in your world of modesty filled with knowledge.

And special appreciation to Dr. Fadwa Labadi and Dr. Nazmi Ju'beh.

## **Abbreviations**

AHC	Arab Higher Committee
AWC	Arab Women Council
AWA	Arab Women Association
AWU	Arab Women Union
AWE	Arab Women Executive (Committee)
GUPW	General Union of Palestinian Women
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PWRDC	Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Center
UN	United Nations
UNHC	United Nations Higher Commission
YWCA	Young Women Christian Association

# Part One

## Research Methodological Outline

## **I. Problem Statement and Objectives**

In a photo that was taken in the early '40s, an assembly made up of more than forty women from Palestine gather around the renowned Egyptian feminist activist Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. The photo, shows a not entirely examined aspect of Palestinian society.

Before 1948, Palestinians engaged in civil society through the channel of charitable work and relief services. It had been a dynamic time for women's progress towards liberation, in which both men and women were active in literary salons and artist exchanges and encounters. Khalil Sakakini, Ibrahim Touqan, Fadwa Touqan, Anbara Khalidi, and Kathy Antonius, were among other active hosts to such Saloons.

The main thesis is that in many ways, whether the movement succumbed to a politics of national consensus at the expense of developing an effective social feminist agenda. The cultural environment of that era was a mixture of men and women, involved in an intensive cultural facet that is often overlooked. Building on Mayer's statement in *Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change*, Mayer uses the protests of 1929 as an example of the transformation and defining of the woman's role, when women went to the streets in protests against the sentencing and hanging of men peasants. The funerals became a major demonstration, with the ladies participating and making the mourning a national one:

Men became martyrs who died for the national cause, women became the mothers of martyrs, a position which would give them importance and visibility in the national struggle. Such activities took Palestinian women out of the isolation of home, family, and community and out of her geographical isolation, and made them part of the greater national struggle.<sup>11</sup>

Dressing always is political. Unveiling can become a symbol of 'modernization,' as the example of the Shah's unveiling policies in Iran, or Qasim Amin's modernist pamphlet *Tahrir al-Mar'a* so vividly demonstrated. Unveiling women, for modernist nationalists, meant progress of the nation. Palestine is no exception. Early modernizing, Sha'rawi included.

While wearing the veil or removing it, is not what defines women in a distinct society, it may reveal to some extent the texture and the margin of freedoms in the society. The connection with gender and nationalist modernity will be a part of the discussion in this research.

Hence, the heterogeneity of Palestinian society underlies my choice of the photo as a cultural expression representative of the period of the British Mandate. In the picture, we see

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1. Mayer, T. (1994) *Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change*. Routledge, p.65.

women of different age groups,<sup>2</sup> projecting diversity. Diversity in looks and appearances from one side, and involvement in political activism portrayed within the women's movement from the other side.

The research will examine the origins and growth of the women's movement in Palestine, with particular reference to Jerusalem, and especially in the ranks of the rising urban middle classes. The choice of Jerusalem in particular is not coincidental. Jerusalem became the central city of Mandate Palestine and was taking particular attention in becoming a central city in the dwelling of the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. The core of this involvement by women is mainly in the educational field, in charitable work (orphans, welfare, and the education of girls), and, in the latter part of the Mandate, in national politics. During this time the women's movement adopted a liberal ideology not far from that of early Western feminism, though circumstances dictated that it lacked the same language of the latter.

Lila Abu Lughod, questions "the familiar dichotomy that has opposed the tradition to modernity, relegating women's domesticity to the realm of conservatism and tradition and

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2. Approximately five members of the ten to fourteen women in the AWE were unmarried. It is difficult to obtain accurate biographical information about women in this period, but the ages of some of the AWE members are known. In 1929, of the unmarried women, Shahinda Duzdar was 23, and Zlikha Shihabi was 26. Melia Sakakini, at 39, was older than most of her single colleagues. Of the married women, Na'imati al-Husayni was 34, and Matiel Mogannam was 29. See; Fleischmann., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

labeling women's emergence into the public sphere, whether in politics, employment, or education, as radical and new."<sup>3</sup> Abu Lughod puts in discussion her suspiciousness on the way modernity is equated with progress and empowerment of women. She also discusses the role of the West and the postcolonial complexity that by all means affected the societies and females as a result. As with Abu Lughod, the attempt of this research, by projecting the development of the Women's movement in Jerusalem and hence, in Palestine, through the political and social contexts regardless of how and who initiated and promoted the development that was emerging in the different building phases of the society. This analysis goes in line with Abu Lughod methodology by not placing the event "along with a trajectory of liberation from patriarchy but squarely within the messy situations of state building, anticolonial nationalism, changing social orders, and the emergence of new classes."<sup>4</sup> Abu Lughod research is a helpful tool to work in line with the question of modernity in this context, especially that her research deals with different countries: Egypt, Turkey, and Iran. We can understand more how this aspect in Egypt has affected the Palestinian movement; especially that Egyptian Huda Sha'rawi was an important trigger to the shaping and emerging of women's movement in Palestine and the Arab region.

The research objectives as a result, will address questions

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3. <sup>2</sup> Abu Lughod, L. (1998) (Ed) *Remaking Women. Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Princeton University Press. NJ. USA, p. 7.
  4. Ibid.

that also explore: Who were those women? Which civil societies or organizations did they belong? Where were they educated? What was the relationship between those women and the Arab women's movement, particularly in Egypt? And should we read their representations in the photo as a sign of 'modernity,' 'progress,' and 'women's freedom'? By trying to find answers to these questions, the thesis can help understand the core of the development of the women's movement, and whether it is an issue of class or a natural development of a movement that fitted as a result, with the circumstances that those women lived. And how modernity and nationalism are a crosscutting that shaped Palestinian women's movement.

By no means, the research tries to claim comprehensiveness, either in the coverage of the different questions in line with the names and numbers of women and organizations, or all those who worked on the issue.

## II. Research Tools and Methodology

The photo reflects the cultural expression of the period. A synchronic versus a diachronic approach will serve as the methodological basis of this paper. A synchronic analysis usually overlooks longer historical transformations to concentrate on a particular period. Such analysis allows the focus on specific stages of development, which makes it possible that the identity of something will alter not only with relation to how we look but when we look. A diachronic approach takes into account longer historical transformations in which the specific findings in the synchronic approach are appreciated with relation to a wider chronological view.<sup>5</sup>

The thesis is an attempt to show that through a photo we may reveal what we may not understand about our past. A photo can mirror certain realities that differ from our imagination of the past. Field research turned up more photos, providing similar glimpses of life that were different from what we knew existed. Not to mention that none of the women existed, and relatives of those who are still surviving are too old. The memories of people, in this case, are more of an imaginarily mixed reality of a certain glorification of the situation that is also too unreal to document. The photo has affected this research like what Sarah Graham-Brown describes in her book:

When historical photographs are used in a

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5. Walton, D. (2007) *Introducing Cultural Studies: Learning Through Practice*. SAGE, p.288.

book such as this, they acquire another layer of meaning ascribed to them by the author and, whatever care is taken in the selection of photographs, the power of the images as well as conceptual considerations make a choice a personal one.<sup>6</sup>

It is true that “even if it is possible to resist the beguiling sense which these photographs often give the viewer of gazing into the past like Alice through the looking-glass, there is still the unpredictable arresting of the eye and the emotions - by a detail in a photograph.”<sup>7</sup>

In the case of this photo, and with the selection of pictures found throughout the research; the analysis comes in line with Graham who says: “Sometimes it is an incongruous detail or an item of clothing which makes the photograph memorable and appealing, demanding to be chosen in preference to other photos showing the sense of theme.”<sup>8</sup>

It is important not to forget that this comes together with the looks as well.

Such a picture breaks the stereotypical image of Palestinian women of the past. Our views are likely built on orientalist stereotypes of women in traditional and cultural images,

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6. Graham-Brown, Sarah. (1988) *The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860-1950. Images of Women.* Columbia University Press, p.3.

7. Ibid., p.3.

8. Ibid.

which limits our imagination of other ways of life.

It has been such an overwhelming and rich exploration into a lifestyle that, as a Palestinian, did not know existed. The experience revealed facts beyond a photo and a biography, as the research expanded.

Romanticizing an era, or demonizing it, is easier than trying to find the truth within the facts. The perspective remains a naïve one. The personal judgment and analysis have been influenced by the personal background as a woman growing up in a middle-class non-elite background.

Through examining photos, relatives' memories, biographies, and narratives, a particular normalization of women in the Palestinian structure occurred. In the end, whether photos reflect a modern Palestinian society or show peasant, rural Palestinians on donkeys, both perspectives, and images from the observer part of what reflect a reality of Palestinian society.

It is important to realize that the impression this research's photo gives is only half of the reality. The very same women are the women in the picture used by Ellen Fleischmann, mentioned earlier. From an outsider's view, one represents a moving image of how women were, and the other shows traditional images of Arab women. Both photos were real, and of the same women in more or less the same time. One showed what women were like inside their houses, how they wanted to be, how they wanted to be seen, and the other showed how the women had to look when they were in the

streets. Neither undermines or diminishes or increases their value. In both photos, the impression is what counts, and what makes it valuable.

The normalcy of society, regardless of how we perceive its traditions toward secularism or religious behaviors, is what makes our views more sensible. It remains that the researchers, in general, are bound to promote one view or another, either suggesting that the Palestinian woman was a liberal, modern, progressive woman, or that she was part of a general Arab backwardness. The insistence on doing either of these two perspectives made reality lose its space.

The study will include a literature review on previously written biographies and memoirs of Palestinian women and men. Together with previously conducted research about Jerusalem women in the era specified. Because the women in the photo are no longer alive, previously conducted interviews with men and females from the older generation, as well as their daughters, sons, and other relatives will be used to construct a clearer picture of the lives of the women in that photo. Such work in documentation, as well as the tremendous efforts put in oral history projects have undoubtedly helped preserve Palestinian narrative to a certain extent.

Photos also contribute significantly to the examination of the Palestinians' culture, as well as social and political changes and development in that period.

### III. Boundaries and Limitations

Palestinian women's history is still largely unwritten, and the attempts to write it are complex, given its natural diversities. Narrative history, though, is a tool that has been used in the last two decades as a way to preserve this larger history. However, when it comes to women, as E. Fleischmann puts it:

The relationship between Palestinian nationalism and Palestinian women is historically complicated. All too often has been dismissed, and the women involved during this period relegated to marginal footnotes in the national narrative if that. The seemingly endless national crisis has resulted in massive dislocation, imprisonment, death and dispersal of family members, as well as wholesale economic, political and personal deprivation. Women, of course, have been deeply affected by all of this. One of their responses early on in history was to energetically organize on their own.<sup>9</sup>

According to Fleischmann, previously written research relied mainly on documents archived by the British government,

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9. Fleischmann, E. (1995) *Jerusalem Women's Organizations During the British Mandate (1920s-1930s)*. PASSIA: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of ... (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://www.passia.org/jerusalem/publications/J\\_wom\\_orgitish\\_man\\_txt.htm](http://www.passia.org/jerusalem/publications/J_wom_orgitish_man_txt.htm) , p.6.

which can be found at the public office in Britain, as well as in the different publications of newspapers and journals of that time. This by itself provides a shortcoming in available information, because the data is limited to what the British wanted to collect and say about Palestinians in that period, giving the whole of the material a biased perspective, and one in which women were not often within their range of interest.

The fact that use of narratives has been a valuable tool in many ways in the last two decades remains, though, of great importance. However, it does not give a full view and truth of that history, given the old age of the interviewed women and men, and the distorted memory of that period. The view that was given is primarily basic and not necessarily useful when it comes to revealing much insight regarding women's status. One of the major shortcomings of the conducted interviews is the lack of analysis.<sup>10</sup>

Whether the interviews<sup>11</sup> have been carried out with the actual persons or individuals who were close or knew them, the other problem is the “romanticizing” echo of their memories of that period. Younger relatives and family members tend to give a narrative of what they think, imagine, or sometimes

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10. Dr. F. Abdel Hadi and her research team contributed thoroughly through oral history the political contributions of Palestinian women from the 1930s to the 1950s in three big volumes. Despite this, it still remains that the early intellectual contributions of Palestinian women have not yet been fully studied. The fact that such work is more documentary than analytic gives room for more explorations in a research such as this one.

11. Ibid.

wanted to take place.

As a result, the personal biographies and memoirs become as a valuable reference, whether they were written by the women themselves, or men at that period, or by peers and family members. The fact that a biography is written is an important indicator of the presence of a different status than the one we know of or are bound to think about. It shows a dynamic movement of the society through the writer's name and brings people closer to an understanding of how life was in that period. A Palestinian woman having the "luxury" of writing a memoir is by itself an indicator of the type of women we are discussing. Nur Masalha says:

A significant move has been made towards reshaping the narrative and bringing it to life through women writers and females voices. Such voices and oral histories provided inspirations to novelists such as Elias Khoury, who used such major material for his novel *Gate of the Sun*, where he was critical of the male-dominated structure of Palestinian society.<sup>12</sup>

In this research, the memoirs and biographies of 'Anbara Khalidi (2013), Khalil Sakakini (2004)<sup>13</sup>, Serene Husseini

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12. Masalha, N. (2012) *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory*. Zed, pp. 226-228.

13. السكاكيني ، خليل . (٢٠٠٤) يوميات خليل السكاكيني الكتاب الثاني . مؤسسة الدراسات المقدسية . فلسطين

(2008)<sup>14</sup>, Rabiha Dajāni (2010)<sup>15</sup>, Fadwa Touqan (1999)<sup>16</sup>, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (2001)<sup>17</sup>, Hussein Fakhri Khalidi (2014)<sup>18</sup>, and others will be among the main search components and sources of knowledge. The biographies offer not just the memories of the given person but also the surrounding lifestyle and people. It also unveils other names that are yet to be discovered by researchers of that period.

Between a history that we are told existed and photos that show a particular lifestyle and class, there remain a lot of unanswered, unfocused questions to be answered, and women to be discovered as well.

The question of ‘modernity’ in such a study that uses women modern looks and clothing as the first insight for research remains a real challenge, to which, Lila Abu Lughod in the *Remaking of Women* (1998) will contribute a lot to this paper.

How the notions of modernity,

Have been produced and reproduced

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14. الحسيني، سيرين شهيد.(٢٠٠٨) ذكريات من القدس ترجمة عن الفرنسية: محمد برادة . دار الشروق. عمان الاردن.
  15. الدجاني،مقدادي ،ربيحة.(٢٠١٠) اضاءات من خبرتي وتراث امتي.دار الشروق. عمان - الاردن
  16. طوقان، فدوى (٢٠٠٥) رحلة جبلية صعبة , سيرة ذاتية. دار الشروق للطباعة والنشر. رام الله/ فلسطين. الطبعة الثانية.
  17. جبرا، ابراهيم جبرا(٢٠٠١) البئر الاولى . سيرة ذاتية. المؤسسة العربية للدراسات والنشر
  18. الخالدي، حسين فخري.(٢٠١٤) ومضى عهد المجاملات. مذكرات . دار الشروق. عمان. الاردن

through being opposed to the non-modern in dichotomies ranging from the modern/primitive of philosophy and anthropology to the modern/traditional of Western social theory and modernization theory, not to mention the West/non-West that is implied in most of these dichotomies.<sup>19</sup>

Thinking of modernity can undoubtedly help in reassessing the projects of modernizing the Middle East as Abu Lughod puts forward in her *Remaking of Women*. The whole discussion around the roles of women as mothers, managers of the domestic realm, as wives of men and as citizens of the nation, can take us as far as Plato<sup>20</sup> and Aristotle<sup>21</sup>. In their view of constructing the State and how they perceived the role of women in different set ups, and continue to discuss it.

Foucault's provocative exploration of the dark underside of the modern state and its institutions like schools, hospitals, and prisons where the everyday practices of normalization and disciplining that now have spread throughout society were developed.<sup>22</sup>

The confusion that Abu Lughod draws is also of importance

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19. Abu Lughod, L. *Remaking of Women.*, p. 8.

20. Plato's *Republic*.

21. Aristotle's *On Politics*.

22. Abu Lughod, L., p.8. See also; Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality* [https://www.academia.edu/417342/Anthropologies\\_of\\_Modernity\\_Foucault\\_Governmentality\\_and\\_Life\\_Politics](https://www.academia.edu/417342/Anthropologies_of_Modernity_Foucault_Governmentality_and_Life_Politics).

to the problem of this research:

What seems so confusing about the calls for remaking women at the turn of the century and into the first half of the twentieth century is that they included advocacy of both women's greater participation in the public world - through education, unveiling, and political participation- and women's enormous responsibility for the domestic spheres.<sup>23</sup>

The main issue remains as Abu Lughod points out that nationalism and visions of modernist national development were essential to both arguments.<sup>24</sup> It is also important to note that the understanding of nationalism can have many faces, in which the early modern nation-state building, were characterized by struggles between modernist (secular) and conservative (often religious) political actors.

Resources remain limited despite their availability. Resources are inconsistent and contradictory on many occasions, which create confusion, and the information on certain issues and topics often differs. Sometimes, the same names could be given to different people, as well as organizations and events. Fleischmann has stated in her work *The Nation and its 'new' Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948* that part of this problem is the fact that resources of information are in both Arabic and English, and that "the

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23. Abu Lughod, L. *Remaking of Women.*, p.8.

24. *Ibid.*

British were often slipshod about translating. For example, they often used different names to refer to the same group. However, also, not surprisingly, perceptions varied widely as to the groups' objectives and histories."<sup>25</sup> For these reasons, personal biographies often can serve as a provider of more actual events and names. The different forms of sources she used were problematic, especially due to the generalization of certain issues, such as those in the press. There are also limitations in government documents since they are selective in nature. The British records, for instance, were by the interests of the British government in Palestine. Their choice in mentioning women or dealing with them was limited and in alignment with the personal prejudices of government officials and their attitudes towards women. That is why "there tends to be a ghettoization of women in films about education, health, and religious affairs."<sup>26</sup>

Conversely, Fleischmann considers interviews with the ladies who lived during that period as the richest sources of information. Despite this, there were problems in interviewing, among them being the following: "memory

impairment, different interests or focuses between the interviewer and the narrator, and individuals' personal or political agendas that influence their interpretations or recollections of the past."<sup>27</sup>Photos and information from

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25. Fleischmann, E. (1997) *The Nation and its "New" Women: The Palestinian women's movement, 1920-1948*. University of California Press., p.260.

26. Ibid., p.9.

27. Ibid., p.9.

social media and different Internet resources are also not a reliable source, but yet remain a primary source for collecting information. Photos and documents from the Israeli archives also served to bring in more light to the information.<sup>28</sup>

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28. Prof. Ahmad Natour, former Head of Shari'a court in Jerusalem (Israeli controlled) provided me with the documents that are attached later in the Annex)

#### IV. Literature Review

The research relies heavily on personal biographies. However, in the literature review, the attempt was made to focus on a few, that were written by women and lived in that period. As mentioned earlier, personal biographies remain to be a major source of information for the search in Palestinian history in the distorted situation of Palestine, that affected the way history was told. The search brought in an exciting path through personal biographies written by men and women of that era. In such research, finding a woman's name created another way of the investigation. Journals offer a far-reaching portrayal that a photo cannot necessarily convey. A biography can explain the history of the picture and the people it portrays, not necessarily those identified names or faces.

Anbara Khalidi's biography, *Memoirs of an Early Arab Feminist* (1978),<sup>29</sup> flawlessly captures the experience of a Muslim Arab woman at the beginning of the twentieth century. The work is an important description of the inner Palestinian being, including the sense of identity, cause, and struggle.

Anbara gives an important testimony of her last years living in Jerusalem, which she did until 1948, detailing the living images of the Zionist threat, fear, and terror. She also discusses

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29. Khalidi, A. (2013) *Memoirs of an Early Arab Feminist: The Life and Activism of Anbara Salam Khalidi*. (First published in Arabic by Dar al-Nahar, Beirut 1978.) Trans. Tariff Khalidi. Pluto Press.

how the British empowered and supported their growth as terror groups in the first place by arming them and organizing them while safeguarding the locals by imprisoning them in their homes. Their sorrowful exodus that still leaves their house inhabited today by the UNHC, and the Arab College that is currently hosting the headquarters of the UN, keeps the place haunted, with her last words bidding farewell to every room in the house, thus marking another tragedy of a Palestinian life.

Together with the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center, Dr. Faiḥaī 'Abdel Hadi (2005)<sup>30</sup> and Jihan Hilou (2009)<sup>31</sup> provide an invaluable documentation of the oral history of the Palestinian feminist and women's movement in three volumes (the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s). The conducted interviews included women who were still alive at the time, and are the principal actors of this research. The work tries to track precise movements that involved women as well in that period. A lot of the information required was not easy to access, considering the loss of memory and other old age effects afflicting the book's subjects. However, yet, those testimonies remain invaluable to the Palestinian oral history and researchers on the topic. The work also has little analytical revisions, a shortcoming that points to the lack of the analytical previews that could be a result of some emotions Palestinian still encounter when discussing the

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30. عبد الهادي. فيحاء . ادوار المرأة الفلسطينية في الثلاثينات (٢٠٠٥) . مركز المرأة للحوث والتوثيق . رام الله . فلسطين

31. الحلو، جهان. المرأة الفلسطينية : المقاومة والتغيرات الاجتماعية (٢٠٠٩) . شهادات حية للمرأة الفلسطينية في لبنان . مركز المرأة الفلسطيني للبحث والتوثيق. رام الله . فلسطين.

Nakba period.

Rashid Khalidi (1984)<sup>32</sup> provides as well an important historic view in the *Before Diaspora*. A period that describes the period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1948 in pictures.

‘Ayda Al-Najjar brings the memory of the place and the relation between man and the land in *Al-Quds wa al-bint al Shalabiya* (2013)<sup>33</sup> (Pretty Girl), and from the perspective of someone who was born in Jerusalem. *Al Bint Al Shalabiya* is the witness to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is a witness to that girl. By choosing the word “Shalabiya” (Arabic slang for cute) for the title, she attempted to reflect a social code that connects from one side and is understood on the other hand within the culture of this place in particular. A social system that brings Palestinians in this sense with the same set of behaviors and traditions that dignifies them from others, such as songs, food, and dressing style.

Ellen Fleischmann(1995) *Jerusalem Women’s Organizations During the British Mandate (1920s-1930s)* tries to focus on Palestinian women’s participation in the political arena during the Mandate period, in an attempt to “provide a corrective to the usual historical narrative that presents history as a universal human story exemplified by the lives of men.”<sup>34</sup> According to Fleischmann, women have been noticeably absent in almost all accounts of Palestinian history as a result

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32. Khalidi, W. (1984) *Before Their Diaspora: Photographic History of the Palestinians: 1876-1948*. The Institute for Palestine Studies.

33. النجار، عايدة. القدس والبنت الشلبيية (٢٠١٣) دار السلوى . عمان . الاردن

34. Fleischmann, E. *Jerusalem Women’s Organizations.*, p.6.

of historical traditions that give men precedent over women, and consider women largely irrelevant to the major events of the time. Her book is an attempt at acquiring knowledge of the past to help broaden context and deepen understanding of the current situation.

Additionally, according to Fleischmann, it is not the insignificance of women's roles that made their participation marginalized.

Palestinian women, as she puts it, "have always been active participants in the making of their history, despite common misperceptions that they did not do anything."<sup>35</sup>

Promoting women's rights was among the worries of Palestinian scholars and intellectuals such as Khalil Al Sakakini, who emphasized the importance of considering women's status on a given occasion in his thought and discussions.

All previously written research and literature undoubtedly provide significant milestones in the development of the Palestinian women's movement in the first half of the twentieth century. Some emotions expressed in the writings of the Palestinians are a good source for analyzing beyond the expressed feelings that still undoubtedly affect the Palestinians to this day. The Nakba and the two decades that preceded it remain a very tough period in Palestinian history that in many ways contributed to the lack of analytical and

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35. Ibid.

systematic contributions.

The work of Western researchers remains bound with orientalist ideas that are set in advance, which also leaves a place for more analyzing into the provided information.

Bringing all the different views together may contribute to a more fact-based analytical research that understands both the importance of the strong emotional expressions in Palestinian literature and the need to look at Palestinian history in a more critical manner that enables us to understand and learn from the lessons of the past.



## Part Two

# The Growth and Development of the Palestinian Women's Movement in Jerusalem During the British Mandate (1920s-1940s)

## 1. Introduction

Palestinians have busied themselves since the occupation of 1948 in a daily struggle for survival. That day-in-day-out effort succeeded in eliminating many of the memories of their actual history, which also became, in time, limited to certain people and names and events that eventually excluded women.

The exclusion of women comes as a result of aspects ranging from historical prejudices against women in high business and political positions to the rejuvenation of Islamic fundamentalists that view women as subordinate to men. As in the majority of neighboring Arab societies, Palestinian women were subject to the dominance of a patriarchal Arab culture, which prevailed in the urban and rural areas. Palestinian women, in the words of Masalha, “continue to be excluded, even within the subaltern narrative and the relatively more democratic new global media.” He continues with affirmations through Palestinian female scholars such as Kassem (2011), Hammami (2003), and Khalili (2007), who have shown the marginalization of gender narratives and women’s voices and contributions to collective Nakba memory and Palestinian historical consciousness within the Palestinian refugee story. Women’s memories are often silenced as they are undermined within the Palestinian nationalist discourse, and this is an issue that Palestinian subaltern studies have failed to address adequately. Despite the interviews with women and the recording of women’s voices, men are presented as the main protagonists.<sup>36</sup>

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36. Masalha, N. *Palestine Nakba*, pp. 226-228.

Edward Said, in his introduction to Serene Husseini's<sup>37</sup> biography, writes:

For an Arab girl in between the two world Wars, education was limited (she went to the Friends School in Ramallah, and graduated from The American University in Beirut). Education, as such, was unfamiliar but we can see that an alerting signal of a super energy that pushed the Palestinians and especially women, to revolt against submitting to accepting the role of a passive or cynical viewer. This power urged them to contribute to the cooperative campaign in development and collective resistance. A situation that reflects on many of the Palestinians, education and learning self-independence induced Serene to continue what politics and geography obstructed. This, after half a century, became one of the qualities of the Intifada: the formation of a unified front of civilians, men, women, and children, uniting in harmony against the Israeli forces across the occupied lands, as a result of their organization, their innovative thinking, intelligence and optimistic will.<sup>38</sup>

As many of the distorted events and memories in the Palestinian narrative are fading away, so too is the woman's

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37. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Serene Husseini.

38. حسيني، شهيد، سيرين. (٢٠٠٩) ذكريات من القدس. ص. ١٧.

part in that story. This research is an attempt to explore women from an angle that takes them outside their typical household roles and to check the reality of women's roles in that period.

In a world that is conquered by veils, narratives and photos show a different picture. This research will be an attempt to dig into the stories of women who were active and had a participatory role in the society, by forming the women's movement in Palestine and by being part of a regional and international women's movement. The photo that instigated this research is part of what comprises a relation between photography and social history as Graham-Brown puts it:

The triumphant announcement of photography as the universal language of the future was the first of many grandiose claims made for photographic realism. The notion of a documentary form, which would supersede the frailties of human observation, fitted well with the positivism, which characterized much Western thought in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although many doubts have since been raised about the veracity of photographic images, there is still a lingering sense that a photograph has a documentary value different from, and perhaps superior to, other forms of representation.<sup>39</sup>

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39. Graham-Brown, S., p.1.

Artworks, as Heidegger (2008) explains, are things, a definition that raises the question of the meaning of “thing,” such that works have a “thingly” character.<sup>40</sup>

Within that broad concept, Heidegger chooses to focus on three dominant interpretations of things, which are as follows: things as substances of properties, things as the manifold of sense perception, and things as formed matter. Heidegger is famous for using the study of shoes as an example for the analysis of culture, as he explains the viewer’s responsibility in considering the variety of questions about shoes, for instance, and not just asking about form and matter. He wants the audience to ask issues that can relate to purpose and reason, source and belonging. For Heidegger it is about us, the viewers, who in this way can get beyond corresponding truth in a “form” representation, but to reality “matter.” Many questions can be asked as a result, and hence, we can relate to our research on this photo. The question of purpose and reason can be delved in the question of the veil or unveil of the women in the picture. Why the same women seen in the photo unveiled are the same, who are perceived in other photos in the same period veiled in public areas. This takes us to the question of contradiction women live and face. The controversy of modernity and tradition in the behavior of the same set of women.

The view of Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, in his essay on Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*, situates such arts explicitly

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40. Heidegger, M. (2008) *The Origin of the Work of Art*. Harper Collins, pp. 143-165.

within the context of history. Whereas his criticism is charged with the task of revealing what he calls the “truth content of a work of art,” which is intimately bound up with its ‘material content.’<sup>41</sup> Historically anachronistic features of the content aim in criticism to the destruction of this outer layer for the work’s inner truth content to be grasped. According to Benjamin, the fundamental philological error of commentary is mere to situate the work about the “lived experience” of its author’s biographical life, instead of the broader medium of historical reception through which it has passed down to the contemporary critic.<sup>42</sup> Research perceives the photo in this sense, it is the content of what the photo has represented, it shed light on the modernity, and the controversy of the women themselves and the society they live in. It allowed an observation that can fill in the gap of overseeing the community in a particular set of images that filled in individual interests of researchers. Benjamin’s Romantic theory of immanent criticism insists that the work must contain its essential criterion, such that the critic proceeds from the work itself and not from the life of the author.<sup>43</sup>

As a result, “truth content, in contrast, is not to be sought in the notable features of the work’s technique, but in the unity of its distinct form. The task of criticism is to make this truth content an object of experience.”<sup>44</sup>

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41. Osborne, P. and Charles, M. (2011) *Walter Benjamin* (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/benjamin/>.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

Photos represent a preservation of a memory of the past. In the Palestinian case, photos may represent more than a sentimental personal memory of the lived past, but a proof amid the disturbing history of identity under occupation. The photo in this research may be a good example to show, as well as, understand the contradictions that continue to face women in the Palestinian society specifically and the Arab society at large. The veil as an instrument of reflection on dominance on women within what seems to be a traditionally accepted control. While the majority of women in the photo do not wear the Hijab, it is undoubted that many of those women are seen in other pictures. Such photos have been circulated in their time in newspapers and different societal and political settings. This means that the women in the picture, without the veils, were aware that the photo would not be privately used, knowing they would leave the room wearing their masks in some cases.

Dressing relates to the certain aspect of modernity that connects societies together globally. In societies as the Palestinian, the change in dress codes can relate to many indications to help understand the community and the particular surrounding of a setting.

While wearing the veil or removing it, is not what defines women in a distinct society, but it undoubtedly reveals the texture and the margin of freedoms in the society. How this tragedy with gender and nationalist modernity will be a part of the discussion in this research? The notions of modernity that were produced and reproduced excellently as a result

|||| . . Nadia Harhash . . ||||

of examinations within modern dichotomies that range from modern/primitive of philosophy and anthropology to the modern/traditional of Western social and modernization theories.

## 2. The Photo

As mentioned earlier in the theoretical section, the research will work in examining the photos through a synchronic versus diachronic approach. The synchronic approach, according to Walton, ignores longer historical transformation and concentrates on a specific period of time. In this sense, this can help us in better identify the specific developments that we can see inside the photo. It is also important to note, that in such approach, we need to take into consideration on not just how we look at the photo, but when and why we are looking. The diachronic approach, on contrary, focuses on longer historical transformations that look beyond the specific photo. This demands that “the specific findings of a synchronic approach are appreciated with relation to a wider chronological view.”<sup>45</sup>

The memories of the Palestinian past have been so distorted by all of the catastrophes and defeats Palestinians have lived on a personal and accessible level.

The collective memory in times of disaster seems to become personal, and memories are wisely hidden or in many cases diminished. It is not a coincidence that a Palestinian narrative is not properly collected. Years of silence as a result of defeat and helplessness led to an unsaid silence in what turned out to become the Palestinian voice. And this silence and distortion are perhaps corrected by photography, which, in its way, can capture things as they are, not ignoring the fact that photos

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45. Walton, D., p.289.

continue to show a selective reality of the society and people that cannot be definitive of the society as a whole.

The attempts of many scholars, as well as individuals in preserving the Palestinian narrative in the last three decades, is a genuine effort to discover the truth of a society that is buried under the rubble of occupation and caged into denial and defeat. It was not until the 1970s, confirms historian Nur Masalha that “published Palestinian oral history began to offer a picture of events from the perspective of the ordinary refugees who had experienced dispossession and dispersal.”<sup>46</sup> Masalha confirms as well that this “was before the opening of the Israeli governmental and institutional archives –in the late 1970s –and at least a decade before the emergence of the Israeli ‘new historiography’ in the mid-to-end of the 1980s.” Historian Masalha brings out an important point of confirmation here in regards to the historical Palestinian narration process that the current Israeli propagandists try to promote as being driven and supported by Israeli historians, in an attempt to make Israel look like a liberal country that promotes progressive thinking.

Photos of the lived past remain a primary source, if not the only source, after the deaths of most people who lived at the beginning of the twentieth century. The official archives of that period are Ottoman and whatever is left of the British Mandate, and even though used, they haven’t expressed the real and genuine aspect of Palestinian society.

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46. Masalha, N., p.215.

The context of social history when looking at photographs produces some other forms of meaning that have to be taken into consideration, as Sarah Graham-Brown describes in her *The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860-1950*, such forms:

Include the context in which the photograph was taken; the relationships of power and authority between photographer and subject; the aesthetic and ideological considerations which affected the photographer's choice of subject and the way the photograph might be interpreted by its viewers in a particular historical period.<sup>47</sup>

Many aspects of Palestinian life have been distorted amid the occupation and the struggle for survival that turned, year in and year out, into an effort to prove an identity that has been shaped in the last decades with the agendas of politicians and the occupier.

Going through old family photos and albums unveil hidden treasure in the Palestinian memory in its search for identity.

In our specific photo lies a clear reflection of a style of living that has not been expressed in general. Palestinian memory is occupied with the scenes of the diaspora and the fleeing of people during the Nakba.

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47. Graham-Brown, S. p.3.

The photo<sup>48</sup> provides an instructive to myths about the Mandate period, such as the one that states that the veil was universal.

There is also something about the women in the photo that shows a proud attitude, in the way they sit or the way they stand. They are dressed in an elegant manner that suits an official lunch or gathering, and particularly a formal meeting that was women-centric in nature.

The way they are all dressed is a combination of chic and casual, so they probably knew the difference, and knew how their attire fit in with customary dress codes. In this way, we can presume that many of them probably belong to a higher class, and are likely of at least an educated middle class.

Viewing the look, the faces, and the figures, the women do not seem to be only young graduates from universities, but wives and mothers.

Somehow this photo breaks another primary taboo, in what the society perceives on women in that period. Education didn't seem to be restricted to a certain age, and hence, working and involvement in civil society seemed reasonable in the reflection of this photo. In this sense, the picture also reflects a substantial controversy, especially when we look at other pictures of this woman. It can shift us from thinking of modernity to dispute when we realize that the same women wore veils in other locations, mostly public

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48. See: Annex: Photos #9.

outdoors occasions.<sup>49</sup> Hence, this brings in the question of how modernity was practiced, and how genuine it has been.

In the photos mentioned above, and are attached in the photo annex, one can easily track the difference. When and where is an important question here. We can notice the women's outgoing photo (#7) in Alexandria in 1939 , whereas in the photo a year before in Cairo (#2), the women were more uptight. It is not surprising to think that these women became more familiar with the country they are visiting, as well as the frequency of their public appearances. In the photo taken in Alexandria, almost all women were only wearing hats and not particularly long sleeved dresses. It was more of an act of fashion rather an act of covering the head. In other outdoor photos in Jerusalem, it could be also the weather as a factor, that made the clothes thicker and darker.

The photo is on the occasion of an official visit by Huda Sha'rawi to Jerusalem, a critical moment within the region's women's movement. The photo took place in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, a hotel whose prestige makes clear these women's higher class in society. To have a meeting or a convention in the King David Hotel became restricted to leaders and high-profile organizations. Contrarily, however, it is also important to note that not many hotels existed in that time, and King David was a landmark for visitors from the region.

As the research developed, names of activist women whose

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49. See: Annex: Photos #2, 6,7,8,11,12.

contribution to that period and circumstances were starting to be recognized. One cannot point exactly to every single face and declare, “This is who she is,” however, active women in the creation of the Palestinian women’s movement appear in this picture.

Despite the distraction and inconsistency of information, as well as the lack of a chronicle of consistent data, the Arab Women Council and the preparation for that event that started in Jerusalem, through researching, the women participating became apparent.

According to the tagging in the British Mandate Jerusalem Photo Library. A page set by Mona Halaby. The women in the photo are: Madiha Nusseibeh<sup>50</sup>, Nabiha Nasser<sup>51</sup>, Madeleine Rahel Albina, Zahiya Nashashibi, Catherine Berouti Gelat, Georgine Attalla Calis, Fadila Duzdār, Shahinda Duzdār<sup>52</sup>, Hilda Azzam, Katie Aboussouan Salāmah, Lucy Gress, Pauline Mantoura, Matiel Mughannam,<sup>53</sup> as well as Huda Sha’rawi.<sup>54</sup>

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50. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Madiha Nusseibeh.

51. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Nabiha Nasser.

52. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Shahinda Duzdar.

53. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Matiel Mughannam.

54. Other documents mention the participants as follows: Huda Sha’rawi and (two Egyptian women); Zleikha Shihabi, Tarab Abdel Hadi, Milia Sakakini, Adel Azar, Anbara Khalidi, Wajiha Hussein, Kokun Tuleil, Qudsiyyeh Seif Eddin, Nuzha Darwish, Salma Hussein, Badrieh Gussein, Fatima Abu Suoud.

### **3. An Overview of the Political Context**

The Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which Balfour promised Jews a home in Palestine, marks the beginning of what later became the Palestinian tragedy. Even though the declaration included the preservation of the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities, Palestinians didn't trust the declaration and found in the British position an apparent betrayal. Palestinians were, however, not entitled to make decisions, as the ruling Ottoman Empire was in charge, and was struggling through its final days of power. Masalha argues:

the Israeli state owes its very existence to the British colonial power in Palestine, despite the tensions that existed in the last decade of the British Mandate between the colonial power and the leadership of the European Yeshiva. With the Ottomans being left in control of Palestine after the First World War, it is very unlikely that a Jewish state would have come into being.<sup>55</sup>

After the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Palestinians aligned themselves with the Pan-Arab national movement that was led by Sharif Hussein. The Mandate period proved the British failure to fulfill its promises of independence to the people of Palestine. Walid Khalidi (1984) describes the Palestine view of the Mandate as

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55. Masalha, N., p.33.

“an Anglo-Zionist condominium and its terms as instruments for the implementation of the Zionist program; it had been enforced on them by force, and they considered it to be both morally and legally invalid.”<sup>56</sup> The British started their Mandate by dismissing the mayor of Jerusalem, who was opposing the Zionist program. The application of the British Mandate led to the rise of Jewish immigration, namely by the appointment of first Higher Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel, who was a Zionist propagandist. May 1921 saw riots among the Palestinians in protest against Zionist mass immigration. At that time, Palestinians started to organize themselves. Christian-Muslim associations were formed throughout the country. The formation of the associations led to the election of delegates and a call for a national congress, which elected an executive committee. Between January 1919 and August 1922, three congresses were conducted, and they expressed the fear of Zionist political objectives and continued to reject the Balfour Declaration.<sup>57</sup>

At that time, the Jewish population, living mainly in Jerusalem, was a small minority that didn't exceed one-sixth of the population. The waves of immigration from Europe aroused unrest and fear, accompanied by hate toward the Jewish growth in the area. From 1918 to 1929, according to Walid Khalidi, “some sixty new colonies were established, Zionist landownership rose from 2.04 percent to 4.4 percent

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56. Khalidi, W. (1984) *Before Their Diaspora: Photographic History of the Palestinians: 1878-1948*. The Institute of Palestine Studies, p.85.

57. *Ibid.*

in 1929, and the proportion of the Jewish population increased from 9.7 % to 17.6 % during the same period.”<sup>58</sup>

The existing Palestinian leadership was composed primarily of notables from particular families, whom have eventually molded the first Arab Palestinian political parties like the Palestine Arab Party, the National Defense Party, and the Independence Party, which formed the first strains of democratic development, out of which remained a manifestation of a continuous debate since the leaders of those organizations came from traditional rivalries inside those families.<sup>59</sup> Dr. Hussein Fakhri Khalidi, the Mayor of Jerusalem in the 1930s, expressed explicitly his feelings and awe about the split and rivalry between the two families (Husseini and Nashashibi) that transgressed the interest of the nation. Often, the rivalry between the two families led each to conspire with the enemy in attempts to harm the other.<sup>60</sup>

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58. Ibid., p. 86.

59. Ka'war, A. (1996), *Daughters of Palestine*. SUNY Press, pp.6-7.

60. Of the AWE members, Na'imati alHusayni husband, Jamal, was aligned with the Husayni faction, while Matiel Mogannam's husband was secretary of the Nashashibi-dominated National Defense party. The affiliations of the husbands of other AWE members were as follows: 'Auni 'Abd al-Hadi, *Īstiqlal*; Subhi al-Khadra, *Īstiqlal*; and Bulos Shihada, sympathetic to the National Defense party. Porath, *Emergence*, pp. 383-87; AL Hut, *al-Qiyyadat wa al-Mu'assasat*, p. 866. Other AWE members from the two rival hamulas included Fatima alHusayni, Khadija al-Husayni, and Zahiyya Nashashibi; Diya Nashashibi may have been an AWE member. All of these women were single. See: Fleischmann, E., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

The fears of Palestinians rose with the August 1929 establishment of the Jewish Agency, which included world-famous Jewish figures in its membership. This was the first event that raised fear in Palestinians' minds, because such an agency would also increase the British influence on the Zionist movement. The other event that constituted a cornerstone in that period was an unprecedented political demonstration held at the Wailing Wall, where militant right-wing secular members of the Zionist Revisionist Party called for a revision of the Mandate to include the forcible colonization of the Transjordan area and Palestine. This resulted in clashes with Palestinians and was proof that Jewish immigration was not just an innocent affair, but was one that expressed a vision of ruling the future.<sup>61</sup> "A consensus was emerging that political and diplomatic efforts were ineffective and only an armed rebellion directed at Britain could yield results."<sup>62</sup> In December 1935, the British failed to form the local legislative council that they had suggested, in the face of the threats from pro-Zionist members who believed that such a council would hinder the development of the Jewish national home. The Palestinians received this as the last proof that the British role was far from fair.<sup>63</sup>

May 1936 saw open rebellion by Palestinians. The five

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61. Khalidi, W. *Before Their Diaspora*, p.86. Also; by 1933, Jewish immigrants numbered 30,000. In 1934, they numbered 42,000, and in 1935 they numbered 61,000. The escalation produced panic and desperation among the Palestinians, which resulted in the formation of five political parties from 1932 to 1935.

62. Khalidi, W. *Before Their Diaspora*, p.87.

63. *Ibid.*

established political parties united to form the Arab Higher Committee (AHC) under the leadership of Haj Amin Al Husseini. In the same month, a conference was summoned and called for civil disobedience and a general strike to protest the British Pro-Zionist policies. The rebellion endured for three years.<sup>64</sup>

Jerusalem benefited from the progress that the Ottoman Empire had tried to accomplish in the Levant, particularly after the Egyptian “occupation” from 1830 to 1840. The challenge that resulted in providing consecutive attempts inside the different regions of the empire. Among which, Jerusalem became a central city. Kamel Asaly (1990), in his book *Jerusalem in History*, describes Jerusalem as “transformed from a relatively minor provincial town into the biggest city of Palestine and the political-cultural center in the country.”<sup>65</sup>

Tariff Khalidi<sup>66</sup> calls the period from 1900 to 1948 the beginning of the “second period of intellectual history.” According to Khalidi. (1981), the period that proceeded witnessed the first Arab Nahda, or cultural renaissance. He finds this time, within the Mandate promises, as one

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64. Ibid., p.189. See also; The AHC was dissolved on October 1,1937, when four of its members were sent into exile in the Seychelles islands in the Indian Ocean (Dr. Hussein Khalidi, Ya'qub al Ghussein, Ahmad Hilmi, and Fuad Saba). Haj Amin al Husseini and others escaped arrest and took refuge in neighboring Arab countries. Ibid., p. 269.

65. Asaly, K. 1990, *Jerusalem in History*, Olive Branch Press, p.233.

66. Tariff Khalidi was an associate professor of History at the American University of Beirut.

of stunted intellectual growth.<sup>67</sup> Khalidi believes that the conventional image of Arab culture is still being revised; “from such adjustments of focus one gains an empathetic awareness of the cultural equidistance of all generations from a supposedly ideal pinnacle. Brilliance or decadence are no longer adequate descriptions of the intellectual contributions of one era as compared to another. The Arab past speaks to us in many voices rather than in an alternating sequence of eloquence and triviality, Renaissance, and decline.”<sup>68</sup>

Jerusalem’s share in the progress movement had an effect on education. Whereas, the Egyptians during Ibrahim Pasha’s time (some of Mohammad Ali Pasha) enforced education from early childhood. That progress, which increased toward the end of the nineteenth century, during Sultan Abdel Hamid’s time, included state-founded elementary schools in villages and secondary schools in cities such as Jerusalem. according to Adel Manna’ (1986), girl students remained limited in numbers during that period. At the same time, that was a period in which missionary institutions started and grew to include the establishment of private schools. In Haifa, for instance, six private schools were established, one which was for females.<sup>69</sup>

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67. Khalidi, W. (1981). *Palestinian Historiography:1900-1948*, in: Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol.10 No.2. University of Californian Press., pp.59-76.

68. Ibid., p.59.

69. Manna’ Adel. (1986) *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social, and Economic Transformation*. Brill.

## **4. Women Education and Professional Development**<sup>70</sup>

Education and professions are linked together as topics that lead to one another, or /and affect one another. The more educated people are, the more job opportunities increase and evolve. In the Palestinian case, this was not an exception. As education became accessible and was not limited to a particular class in the society (the wealthy), the needs and demands started to change, and the education of women and thus her involvement and participation in different professions became noticeable. It is important not to forget that the modernization towards the end of the nineteenth century is “identified with the emergence of enlightened patriarchs, modernizing upper-class elites, and liberal families.”<sup>71</sup> One can related to modernity partly in women’s rejection of their only roles in domestic duties; education helped women in transforming their gender roles. Whereas, women became change agents in the society.<sup>72</sup>

After the announcement of the constitution in 1908, a significant change occurred in schools and the education system. The number of compulsory educational years before university became twelve. Hence, the community established more schools, and as a result, an increase in cultural development occurs. This included the spread of libraries,

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70. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix and Women’s Writers

71. Abu Lughod, L., p.74.

72. Ibid.

and printing houses and media started. Printing had remained prominent in Jerusalem since its first establishment in 1846 with the Franciscan Fathers Printing House, and it spread in 1908. Media entered Palestine in 1876, when the Ottomans published the official paper, al-Quds Al Sharif, in both Arabic and Turkish. In the same year, Sheikh Ali Rimawi published another monthly newspaper, al-Azal, in Arabic. From 1908 to 1917, around thirty papers were published in different cities, among them Jerusalem. This resulted in increased literacy and scientific as well as religious production.<sup>73</sup>

This opening of the city resulted as well in new job opportunities in the government for both men and women.

The British were interested in establishing a corps of capable government civil servants who could administer efficiently to their own political and strategic interests in Palestine, while in general maintaining the social status quo.<sup>74</sup>

However, the increase in the educational level acted as an agent of social and economic change, which resulted in challenges to the British attempt to maintain the status quo. This, of course included females share of opportunities that opened the channel of women to enter the work force as well as get higher level education. The development in one aspect naturally encouraged another.

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73. Sheriff, M. (2013) *Palestine Ottoman History*. www.ppp.ps.

74. Fleishmann, E., p.12.

In the 1936 revolution, women's participation in supporting the national demands was a result of more awareness that was a natural consequence of the previous decades of education opportunities. In the annex of the Photos, we can see young women collecting donations for the injured and the prisoners. In this photo we see Hind al Hussein and Rabiha Dajāni enthusiastically participating in the campaign.<sup>75</sup> In another photo<sup>76</sup> we see a group of women protesting at the entrance of Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem in the same year. In photos # 21 and 22, we see women on the battle hills carrying guns, and aiding injured.<sup>77</sup> In photo #23, a group of women from the Women Union are knitting as part of a campaign to support the revolution.

‘Ayda Najjar speaks about schools in Jerusalem in that period, with an interesting analysis about how they affected girls' education. According to Najjar, what marked the emergence of a “class” aspect of the Palestinian structure was the economic situation that prohibited low-income families from sending their children, especially girls schools, and the emergence of educational aspiration among the wealthy. The development of private and missionary schools enabled girls as well as boys to obtain better educations and opened the option of teaching abroad, which ultimately resulted in providing that sector of the society with better job opportunities, especially since such schools provided education in languages other than Arabic. At that time, the

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75. See: Anne: Photos # 15.

76. See: Annex: Photos # 16.

77. See: Annex: Photo # 26.

Turkish government was neglecting Arabic as a language, and students were forced to learn Turkish. Competition among schools started at the beginning of the twentieth century, whereas missionary schools competed in providing better services and education and promoting their languages. Among girls' schools, were Schmidt's for the Germans, Salesian Monastery for the Italians, and St. Joseph for the French.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, the Friends school<sup>79</sup> was founded, from which 'Isam 'Abdel Hadi<sup>80</sup>, Serene Husseini, and others graduated. The competition among schools expanded to the Islamic Council, which established the Muslim Girls School within the Aqsa mosque in the old city. In that period, a female "sheik," Sheikha Zahra Al Saleh, was known as a Qur'an teacher in the Abu Suoud Zawiyeh (corner) in the Aqsa mosque. She taught several girls, among them Najjah and Na'eemeh al-Saleh, who later became a teacher at Rawdet Al Ma'aref school (est. 1896), which was headed earlier by their father. Other public girls' schools<sup>81</sup> established in Jerusalem, including the New Ma'muniyyeh, the Old Ma'muniyyeh, and Dar al Mu'allimāt (teachers' college).<sup>82</sup>

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78. See: Annex: Photos # 27,28, 32, 33, 34, 36.

79. See: Annex: Photo #30.

80. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Issam Abdel Hadi

81. See: Annex: Photos from #27 till 38.

82. Najjar, A., pp.135-141.

See also; Even though girls' education was not recommended and popular in villages. Arifa Najjar established Banat Lifta school in the mid 40s. Arifa got her education in the Silesian Italian school. Later her sister Rifqa, who graduated from Schmidt's became the principal of al Zarqa Girls school after the Nakba. Pp.145-147.

The education of women allowed, as well, the opening of more opportunities for women in the work field, in an attempt to improve upon family income in less-privileged areas in the urban part of the country. Consequently, more women left the general devastation and poverty that resulted from the First World War to work in Jerusalem. This gave an active form of life inside Jerusalem and to women. Women started to challenge the traditions that secluded them from public life. Among the upper and middle classes in Jerusalem, education allowed women to actively participate in job-seeking, both on a voluntary basis and for employment.

Serene Hussein Shahid offers an important documentation of and reflection on education among Jerusalem families. It is undoubted that the opportunities and lifestyle that Hussein describes were mostly limited to society's elite class, but it is also undoubted that those opportunities were there. Hussein went to the Islamic New Institute in the old city of Jerusalem until the British forces closed it in 1930. The institute was an educational resource for Palestinian girls.<sup>83</sup>

In her testimony, Serene Hussein also speaks about Hind al-Hussein, who was a few years older than her.

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83. When the institute was closed, S. Hussein speaks about the choice of schools made by her parents, which, according to her, were many. At that time Jerusalem was filled with missionary schools and local ones. Schools converged from German, Italian, French and American. Toward the end, her family chose the Friends School in Ramallah. The director of the school was a woman. She mentions in her biography her Arabic teacher, Eva Bader. Hussein, *Jerusalem Memories*.

Urbanizing of the country increased work-seeking; during that period, poverty and deforestation led people who had relied on farming in rural Palestine to seek different kinds of work. This resulted in the founding of charitable organizations that provided relief aid to those in need. On the one hand, the pressure of the war forced women in the lower class to seek jobs. On another hand, those from a higher level began to develop leadership roles for women through relief and charitable work. In Fleischmann's book, she mentions a Palestinian woman's testimony on that situation: "Saīda Jārallah's father, an eminent judge in the Islamic courts, was unusually progressive regarding the education of his seven daughters. He recognized that providing them with the ability to earn their living reduced their vulnerability in troubled times."<sup>84</sup> Saīda Jārallah was the first Muslim woman to travel to England on her own to complete her education, in 1938.

‘Anbara Khalidi mentions another similar account in her biography, describing her father encouraging her studies, and later allowing her to get involved in work and complete her education.

The experience of Fadwa Touqan, years later, was harsher. She gave a different, as well as traditional, testimony in her biography. She was secluded, being a girl, and not allowed to

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84. Mrs. Jārallah recollected: "He would say that a woman should have her diploma like a bracelet in her hand. For if she did not get married but was widowed or divorced, she would be independent and have her own job and life, and not depend on her father or brother to support her." See: Fleischmann, *The Women's Movement in Jerusalem*, 1920s to 1930s, p.15.

get any education. It was the attention of her famous brother, Ibrahim Touqan, many years later, that helped her get out of that seclusion and allowed her to write.<sup>85</sup>

Nimra Tannous<sup>86</sup> was another example of a woman who became renowned, as the telegraph operator linking communications between the Arab armies in 1948, having come to Jerusalem from a village in the north with her mother and sister so that the girls could continue their educations and later work for the government.

Nimra later became a major contributor to the Palestinian resistance in the 1940s when she assisted 'Abdel Qader al-Husseini in assuring received calls through the mailing system. She became a liaison officer between the Arab troops and the international mediator, Count Bernadotte, who was assassinated by the Zionists in 1948. She also worked as a volunteer in the Jordanian army, where she wore the militant outfit.<sup>87</sup>

Another woman is Nahed 'Abdu al Sajdi, who came from Nablus and attended the secondary school run by the government, the Women's Training College in Jerusalem.<sup>88</sup>

In another phase of the British Mandate period, education

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85. Touqan, F. (2005), *Rihla Jabaliya Sa'ba* (a difficult mountain journey). A biography. Dar Al Shurouq for publishing and distribution. Ramallah, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 2005.

86. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Nimra Tannous.

87. Fleischmann, E. *The women's movement in Jerusalem*, p.16.

88. Najjar, A., pp.41-42.

proved to help women at a different level, which resulted in a major political account. Indeed, the increased education of women was a subject of controversy as well as a liberalizing influence in Palestinian society. “The role and status of women stimulated lively discussions and debates in the press, for example<sup>89</sup>. Women were contributing to articles and were, as well, the subject of discussions regarding the veil and women’s rights. In short, “people managed in that period to work, go to school and survive. Consequently, social and economic changes provided a period in which Palestinian Arab women could develop and grow into expanding roles.”<sup>90</sup> ‘Ayda Najjar mentions in her book, *al-Quds and al-Bint al Shalabiya*, women who participated in different roles in the society.<sup>91</sup>

Among the women who were active in Jerusalem life in the 1930s was Kathy Antonius, the wife of the Lebanese writer Antonius and the daughter of the journalist Faris Miner,

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89. Fleischmann, E., p.17.

90. *Ibid.*, pp.18-19.

91. Among other names are: Najla Nassār, a graduate of Schmidt’s Girls College, and Mary Anton ‘Attalla, a woman who worked in the tourism business in Jerusalem and received a master’s degree in social studies from Harvard University in the 1930s. Among such women was also Sultana Halaby (1901–1985), who received a university degree in business in the United States of America in 1934 and established one of the first commercial libraries in Jerusalem, which included the “artistic section,” to which Mary Attalla contributed. See: Najjar.

owner of al Muqattam newspaper in Egypt.<sup>92</sup> Kathy was among the women who participated in Huda Sha'rawi's invitation to the conference in Cairo in 1938. She was a member of the Palestinian women's movement.

In education, the Palestinian society seemed to have inherited the same passion for educating the younger generation. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, in his autobiography, *al Bi'r al Oulā* (The First Well), expresses his keen anguish and that of his generation in the push toward education. Jabra was born to a low-income family and went on a scholarship to Britain, where he acquired higher degrees and later served as a teacher in Jerusalem and Iraq. Even though it was easier for members of the upper classes to obtain education and send their children abroad, education wasn't limited to the elite level of the society. Khalil al Sakakini wrote extensively in his biography on the difficulties and challenges of teaching and his role as a teacher. Education was a consistent problem, one that Palestinians strived to promote.

This passion affected the status of women in approaching education. A generation of educated females in many ways supported the education of more generations of women. Teaching was a career that remained acceptable for women to work. The establishment of the private missionary schools led to the establishment of more schools by the government

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92. After the death of her husband in 1942, Kathy used the Mufti's Palace (the house of Amīn al Husseini) as a center for international exchange among journalists and diplomats, and which served as a cultural venue for years to come. The Antonius's rented the palace from the owner, who was their close friend. See: Najjar, A.

to create balance and fulfill demand, among which was dār al Mu'allimāt, established in 1919.<sup>93</sup>

Medicine, as a field of specialization, remains an aspiration in the Palestinian family; parents aspire to have a doctor in the household, a desire that seems to have been prominent in the Palestinian mind since the early twentieth century. Women took over the midwifery positions, which had been the societal norm in the previous decades. Jerusalem had tens of midwives, who expanded throughout the neighborhoods inside and outside the old city of Jerusalem in the first decades of the twentieth century. In medicine, women were present as well—a remarkable fact in a time when medicine

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93. The number of students in the years 1924–1925 was 54, rising to 154 in the years 1945 and 1946. The graduates of that institute reached more than three hundred until the Nakba. Among the teachers in the institute were: Saīda Jārallah, Jawhara Kamar, Ester Khouri, Mrs. Qattān, Yusra Salah, and 'Adawiyah al 'Alami. Among the graduates were: Saba Fahoūm, Yusra Barbari, 'Isam Husseini, 'Abla Nassir, Rene' Matar, lawahez 'Abdel Hadi, Wasilla 'Abdel Hadi, Nuha Milhes, and 'Aisha Tījāni, who became a well-known radio broadcaster after the Nakba. Ma'muniyyeh School comprised many female teachers, including: 'Ayda al Khadra, Ni'mati Qmei', Leila Khalidi, Sabiha and Kamirān al Masri, Nadiyyah Rassas, Ni'meh al Saleh, Basima Fares, 'Aliyeh Nusseibeh, Zakiyya Budeiri, 'Itaf Hammād, Amal Medawar, Lam'ah Ghosheh, Alice Kashishian, 'Ikram Khalidi, and others. Najjar, A. *Bint al Shalabiya*, p. 161.

wasn't even widely open to men.<sup>94</sup>

Among the professions to which women contributed were radio broadcasting; some women participated in radio shows in the 1930s and 1940s. Fatimah Mousa Budeiri was a well-known name as a news broadcaster. She worked with Isam Hammād, who later became her husband. After the Nakba, she and her husband started al-Sham Radio in Damascus. Her name echoed the sentence “Huna al-Quds “ for generations to come<sup>95</sup>. Al Budeiri also participated in women's and children's shows on the radio and related topics. Salwa Khammash, Nuzha Khalidi, and Samiha Samara were three names that young adults and children grew up on, listening to their children's shows. Henriette Siksik, who was also known as Miss Suād, was a writer and presenter of educational shows.<sup>96</sup>

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94. In the 1930s, Jerusalem knew Dr. Abla Fawzi, who worked in the government hospital. Dr. Laura Mughrabi was a gynecologist and a pediatrician. Dr. Mughrabi had a private clinic, Damascus Gate. Dr. Salwa Khouri 'Utaqi also worked in the government hospital. In Ramallah, Dr. Charlotte Nicola Saba was known, and was a graduate of London. In Ma'man Allah (mammilla), Dr. Naheel Dajāni operated a dentistry clinic. Najjar, *Bint al Shalabiya*, pp. 104–107.

Palestine also knew other women who presented radio shows and sections with women: Salwa Sa'id, Wadi'ah Shatara, 'Aziza al Hashimi al Saleh under the supervision of Mufida Dabbagh. Journalists including Asma Toubi, Samira 'Azzam, Najwa Ka'war, Sadiyah Nassār, Samīra Abu Ghazaleh, Poet Fadwa Touqan, Mary Sheḥadeh and others were also often hosted on radio shows. Najjar, *Ayda, Bin al Shalabiya*, pp. 171-172.

95. See: Annex: Photos# 46,48,49.

96. See: Photos # 46,47,48,49

Women's organizations became active in mother and child care, providing free services, and daily papers such as al Difa' and al-Carmel contributed by publishing articles that promoted women's education and health-care issues.<sup>97</sup>

Among the outstanding professionals who appeared at that time was also the female photographer Karimah Abboud<sup>98</sup>. Abboud was born in Nazareth and lived in Bethlehem. Karima had a studio in Jerusalem and was very well-known among families.<sup>99</sup>

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97. Najjar, A. p/107-108

98. See: Photos # 50

99. Najjar, A. p.122

## **5. The Emergence of Charitable Societies and Rise of Women Movement<sup>100</sup>**

As discussed earlier, access to education allowed the emergence of a society that moved more towards modernization, whether urbanized or ruralized. Between an elite class and a peasant class of the community, an emerging middle class was created. This became visible in the new professions that started to be created and practiced, as well as the emergence of charitable organizations led by women, and thus, a women's movement was in the formation.

The women's movement in Palestine may have been connected with the first appearances of women's organizations around the world. This, however, cannot be accurately pointed out. At the same time, the arguments about feminism, and what is related to the redefining of women's rights, including clothing, and roles in and beyond the family, as Abu Lughod discusses, were lively topics for men and women who were interested in social reform.<sup>101</sup> Abu Lughod also raises the question of what went on? And she later tries to explore the "historical moment when "new" women and men were talking about remaking women."<sup>102</sup> The connection of women's movement cannot be reviewed without relating to feminism in this regards, and feminism in Palestine has a complicated history, like that in the Arab world, and other places in the world such as India, when women movement began with

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100. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix

101. Abu Lughod, L., p. 4.

102. Ibid.

nationalism and moved into post-independence concerns about the impoverished.<sup>103</sup> We can notice that the Palestinian women's movement took this direction. One important note should not be ignored when discussing women's movement in Palestine is the fact that "wherever Christian missionaries and European colonists set down, and wherever nationalist movements sought to shape new nations, marks were left on gender ideals and possibilities."<sup>104</sup>

The earliest association that is agreed upon, about the emergence of women's organizations, was the Orthodox Ladies Society of Jaffa, which was founded in 1910.<sup>105</sup> Adele 'Azar helped found The Orthodox Women Society with the intention of helping orphaned and disadvantaged girls receive the education. Adele 'Azar served as the president of the Society, and she was also the principal of the Orthodox Girls' School.<sup>106</sup> Among the teachers who worked at the school were Najla Mousa, Souria Battikha, and Liza Butros. Olga Andreas al 'Isa supervised the teaching of sewing.<sup>107</sup>

'Ayda Najjar mentions that women's nonprofit organizations

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103. Ibid., p. 6.

104. Ibid., p. 6.

105. Palestine: Information with Provenance (PIWP database). Orthodox Ladies Society of Jaffa. <http://cosmos.ucc.ie/cs1064/jabowen/IPSC/php/authors.php?auid=45842>.

106. Robson, L. (2011) *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*. University of Texas Press. p. 171.

107. Najjar, Ayda. In Memory of Nakba: Palestinian Women Struggle was bigger than years of Nakba(ar). Aldustour.<http://www.addustour.com/15025/%3Aفيذكرىالنكبة3%+نضال+المرأة+الفلسطينية+كان+قيل+أكثر+A+من+سني+النكبة.html>.

started their activities at the beginning of the twentieth century when Nabihā Mansi established “the Poor Relief Orthodox organization” in Acre and provided humanitarian services. The Orthodox Women Society (est.1910) in Jaffa helped orphan girls get educations and sent them to the American University in Beirut. Among the establishers of this society were men and women that were active in public life and were mentioned in newspapers: Rojina Ya’qub Ghandour, Mary George Dabbas, ‘Afifa Elias Dabbas, Adele ‘Azar, Adele Nicola Dabbas, ‘Afifa Ibrahim al-Qudsi, Julia Saliba Sleem, Victoria Rofael Zarifa, Zahiya Samān al- ‘Isa, Fadwa Elias Burtqush, Melvina Musa Hakim, Fadwa Qdeis, and Sa’da Salim Tamari, who was the president of the society.

In Jerusalem, Jam’iyet tahtih̄b al fatā al-orthodoxiyah (Society for Refining Orthodox Girl) was founded in 1918 under the leadership of Katherine Shukri Deeb and operated until 1947. This organization encouraged the education of girls and sent them for higher education to Schmidt’s College and the English College. Katherine was also active in the establishment of the Women Union and participated in the Women Council in Egypt in 1938 and 1944.

Katherine Siksik was also among the active women in the “Orthodox Girl society.” She also worked in “Society of Poor Sick Relief” before she devoted herself to helping disabled children. She established an organization for the disabled in Beit Jala, where she also built a shelter and a maternity home named “Virgin Mary”. Her work expanded in a very impressive way; she was in charge of four such societies,

which eventually merged with “the Society of nonprofit Arab Orthodox Shelters for the Sick and the Disabled.”

Such organizations increased in Jerusalem and throughout the country in the 1920s. Among the organizations was also “Santa Terez Society,” which had branches in

In 1919, the “Arab Ladies Association” was founded in Jerusalem. It was followed by the Palestine Women’s Union in 1921.<sup>108</sup>

Nazareth, Haifa, and Jaffa. A nun from Nazareth headed this society and became the chairman of the Catholic Nuns in Jerusalem, before dying in 1929.

This society included a clinic and supported the poor and refugees in the Nakba. Badi’ah Khouri Salāmeḥ founded “the Women Nahda Society” in 1923. Salma al Himsi Salāma established Jam’iyyet hāmilat al Tīb in 1926. She worked on fighting illiteracy.

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108. Fleischmann, E. *Jerusalem Women’s Movement*.

## 6. Rise of Women's Movement

One can mark that up until the beginning of the twenties,, and as a result of a socioeconomic role the women organizations were able to fill, Palestinian women were engaging against the policies of the British Mandate. Fleishman states that:

In 1920, for example, before the official onset of the Mandate, twenty-nine women from northern Palestine protested the Balfour Declaration in a letter to the chief administrator of the region, writing that “we Moslem and Christian ladies who represent other ladies of Palestine protest vigorously.” Women participated in violent disturbances between Arabs and Jews that broke out in Jaffa in May 1921; held meetings, formed committees, and raised funds to support a delegation sent to London by the Arab Executive; and directly confronted the government in meetings, calling for independence and an end to Jewish immigration.<sup>109</sup>

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109. Fleischmann, E. (1999). *The Emergence of Palestinian Women's Movement, 1929-1939*. (p.16) Vol.29; <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>From: Intelligence report by Col. Commandant J. Bryon and Captain C. D. Brunton, 12 May 1921, CO 733 13; Ann Lesch, *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 205; al-Karmil, 17, 21, and 31 December 1921 and 8 November 1922.

In 1929, Ni'mati al-Alami<sup>110</sup> established the “Arab Women Society” after the Buraq demonstrations.<sup>111</sup> Many women participated in this society. Hence, this marked the beginning of the formation of Women’s Unions.

The “official” inauguration of an organized women’s movement in Palestine occurred in the wake of the Wailing Wall incidents of 1929. The repercussions of the violence, which resulted in the deaths of 133 Jews and at least 116 Arabs, the arrest of 1,300 people (mostly Arabs), and the execution of three Arab men, had a profound effect on Palestinian society.<sup>112</sup>

On October 26, 1929, Palestinian women convened the Palestinian Arab Women’s Congress, where more than 200 women attended from all over the country. In this congress, the women supported the resolutions and decisions and demands of the Arab Executive Committee, and later a delegation of these women presented the resolutions to the high commissioner. After their return, the participants held a demonstration throughout the city within a convoy of cars. Later in that day, the Arab Women’s Executive Committee was elected to execute and administer the congress’s

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110. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Ni'mati Alami.

111. See: Annex: Photos # 25.

112. Fleischmann, E. (1999). The Emergence of Palestinian Women’s Movement, 1929-1939. (p.16) Vol.29; <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>.

resolutions.<sup>113</sup>

When the Arab Women's Union of Jerusalem was founded in 1929, the association was not as its sister organization, which had been previously founded solely for charitable and educational purposes. It involved political aspects that included the ongoing struggle. The agendas of these associations were focused on national objectives rather than class. Nevertheless, the founders of these organizations were educated and upper-class women from families whose members were leaders of the nationalist movement. They only included women from the working class. The focus was directed toward protesting against the British Mandate's policies and the Zionist entrance and settlement. Of course, women in those organizations were coming from the urban class. Tamar Mayer, in her book *Women and the Israeli Occupation* argued that, because

Rural women were more severely affected by British colonial settlements policies and Jewish immigration than were urban middle-class women since their access to land and thus to agriculture was threatened, their involvement in the national struggle was different.<sup>114</sup>

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113. Fleischmann, E. (1999). *The Emergence of Palestinian Women's Movement, 1929-1939*. (p.16) Vol.29; <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>.

See Annex: Photos # 6a, 6b, 11,12,

114. Mayer, T., (1994) *Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change*. Routledge, p. 65.

She adds that “while urban middle-class women participated through over 200 charitable organizations, rural women participated in active demonstrations and bloody riots.”<sup>115</sup> The situation on the ground naturally often brought rural women into “militant, physical, confrontation of the British and the Jews and facilitated urban women’s involvement in the struggle, while at the same time, the charitable activities in which urban women were involved focused on caring for orphaned victims of peasant rioters, the blind, and the handicapped, and on educating mostly rural women.”<sup>116</sup> Thus, Palestinian women remained united despite differences in their immediate goals. In this sense, a natural synergy occurred in the distribution of associations on the political and social levels among the urban and rural parts of the society. Because of the political situation, women’s main challenging issues were the national struggle. This, in a way, resulted in melting the social issues, especially in countering the patriarchal setup of the society. It was also disturbing to the patriarchy of the male dominance, in a sense that the problems raised by women’s association and movement agendas were related to the national struggle. Such activities made women visible, and their voices were heard and noticed; it “took Palestinian women out of the isolation of the home, family, and community and out of their regional isolation and made them part of the greater national struggle.”<sup>117</sup> Mayer makes an important point when she discusses the Palestinian national agenda in their them. The absence of a clear vision

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115. Ibid.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

of statehood, once the fight and resistance to the British and Zionist movement ended. This resulted in the same unclear future for the women's movement. She writes:

Women's future remained located within the traditional realm even though there was involvement in the national struggle they had become more visible in the public sphere. In fact, it seems that this was the most natural form of general activity for many Palestinian women because they continued their involvement in such organizations from 1967 onwards in the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>118</sup>

As one should not underestimate women's participation within the emergence of their movement in that period, one should also not overestimate their effect.

Their involvement in the protests of 1929 brought them to the front line of the news, according to the Palestinian and regional Arab papers, as well as international ones. The occurrence of the Palestine Arab Women's Congress on October 26, 1929, was mentioned as the first time that women entered the realm of politics. Participating women expressed a sophisticated and self-conscious purpose about their particular role in political action loudly. The media revealed the uniqueness of the women's events with fondness. It was the Palestinian women's voices that were heralded as the first in the Arab world to call for ending oppression, marking

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118. Ibid.

the emergence of women in the public arena. One should not forget the start of the movement within the Egyptian Women Union, but somehow the Palestinian act was more regional. It concerned Palestinian society, but at the same time it affected the same issues relevant to other women in the region and rang the bells of injustice that befell women and oppressed nations. The echo of that council, however, was limited to the effect of the previous emergence of the women's movement in Palestine. This has made it more complicated to find an accurate account of the Palestinian women's movement.

Hence, the discussion of feminism and the women's movement in the Arab world cannot be complete without mentioning Huda Sha'rawi (1879–1947), an Egyptian educator and women's rights activist. Huda Sha'rawi was born in Cairo in 1879 to a wealthy administrator. In 1919, Sha'rawi helped organize the largest women's anti-British demonstration; after a women's movement that witnessed some appearance in the succeeding years of the First World War. In defiance of British orders to disperse, the women remained for three hours in the hot sun. Sha'rawi made a decision to stop wearing her veil in public after her husband's death in 1922. Returning from a trip to a women's conference in Europe in 1923, she stepped off the train and removed her veil. Women who came to greet her were shocked at first, then broke into applause. Some took off their head covers, too. This was the first public defiance of the restrictive tradition. That same year, Sha'rawi helped found the Egyptian Women Union. She was elected its president

and held the position for twenty-four years. Her goal was to establish links between Egyptian and international feminism. She successfully affiliated with the International Alliance of Women. The Union campaigned for various reforms to improve women's lives. The issues included raising the minimum age of marriage for girls to sixteen, increasing women's educational opportunities, and improving health care. Egypt's first secondary school for girls was founded in 1927 as a result of this pressure. Sha'rawi also led Egyptian women's delegations to international conferences and organized meetings with other Arab feminists. In 1944 she founded the All-Arab Federation of Women.<sup>119</sup>

Sha'rawi was committed to Arab nationalism and the Palestinian cause. As a result of the refusal of the International Alliance of Women to support Palestinian women in their struggle against Zionism, the relationship with them foundered.

This set the stage for the launching of an all Arab effort to create a Pan-Arab feminist organization, culminating in establishing built two years before the emergence of the Arab league of states, this organization became a model for what Arab unification efforts can accomplish. Sha'rawi then led a delegation of Egyptian women on a tour of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan to create

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119. Bois, Danuta. (1997) *Huda Sha'rawi. Distinguished Women of Past and Present.*

a federation of Arab feminist unions. By late 1944, the Arab feminist conference was convened in Cairo, and by 1945 the AFU was established, adopting an ambitious agenda of promoting Arab nationalist cause, particularly the rights of Palestinian Arabs, the AFU also echoes the demands of the EFU rejecting the patriarchal system and calling for reforming the Islamic Personal Status laws.<sup>120</sup>

The first congress was held at the home of Tarab<sup>121</sup> ‘Abdel Hadi, the wife of a prominent leader (‘Awni ‘Abdel Hadi) who later became famous in the Īstiqlal Party. The Congress consisted of fourteen women from notable Jerusalem families, among whom Tarab ‘Abdel Hadi held a place on its executive committee. The split that occurred in the council as a result of the rivalry among the families made for inconsistent accounts of the congress’s internal workings. The account of Matiel Mughannam<sup>122</sup>, according to Fleischmann’s research, confirms that it was different from that of Tarab ‘Abdel Hadi. The two women provided detailed and divergent information about the preparatory phase of that Congress.<sup>123</sup>

The Congress remains invaluable to the women’s movement and a counterpoint in its future. The Congress also made them

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120. Talhami, G. *Historical Dictionary of Women in the Middle East and North Africa*, p. 36.

121. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Tarab Abdel Hadi

122. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Matiel Mughannam.

123. Fleischmann, E. *The women’s movement in Jerusalem*.

visible to the British officials, who tried at the beginning to be part of the Congress through their wives. An important historical record to follow is the meeting of the women's representatives at the high commissioner's house within a delegation to deliver the Congress resolution to the British government that had protests against the Belfour declaration, Zionist immigration, the enforcement of collective punishment, the mistreatment of Arab prisoners, and the donations to the Jewish refugees without the allotment of funds for Arab refugees. In that meeting, the women wanted to tend their majesty to the British government itself, and they had demands concerning the release of prisoners. When the meeting ended, the women refused to drink coffee, as a sign of protest to illustrate the bitterness of the British governance. The women went back to the Congress that was still held.

The report of the Higher Commissioner is worth quoting, as Fleischmann did her research on this, because in many ways it explains clearly the real problems, and intentions as well, of British thinking and tactics toward maintenance of the status quo. The critical and dramatic fact is that the British attempted to threaten women, put their efforts down, and silence them through the very traditions of patriarchy that the British both accused the Arabs of and denounced regularly. The commissioner's report included the following:

Attempts were made to induce some of the Muslim leaders to dissuade the women from making the demonstration. At first,



After 1938, the participation of women spread throughout the different Palestinian cities, and women started various branches throughout cities such as Ramallah, Jaffa, Nablus, Acre, Haifa, and Gaza. Among the active women were 'Andalib Al 'Amad from Nablus; Adele 'Azar<sup>127</sup>; Wajiha Tawfik Dajāni from Jaffa; Zleikha Shihābi<sup>128</sup>; Katherine Siksik; Milia Sakakini from Jerusalem; and Lydia Arab from Bethlehem. The Jerusalem branch kept the name and worked together with the Women's Union, which stopped working during the Nakba, but re-registered in 1965 and was headed by Zahiya Nashashibi.<sup>129</sup>

In Jerusalem, charitable organizations were similarly focused on empowering women by educating young mothers in the principles of parenting and offered training aimed at self-sufficiency and home improvement. Diana Saīd was a graduate of the Girls College of Beirut in the 1940s and was among the first specialized trainers in this domain.<sup>130</sup>

The regional sentiments toward the British occupation were the same, and women were encountering the same difficulties and challenges. Thus, the courage and the initiative of the women in Egypt must have led to a spread of courage among the women of Palestine.

Fleischmann stresses an important point that would mark

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127. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Adel Azar.

128. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Zleikha Shihabi

129. Najjar, A. *Bint al Shalabiya*, p .203-207.

130. *Ibid.*, p.123.

the Palestinian women's movement in that period, and that continues to affect it today; according to her, there has been an overlapping of names of women in the different organizations and associations, which resulted in inaccurate information. This overlapping also indicates the split that took place between the major elite families in Jerusalem in their well-known rivalry over status. "In 1938 or 1939,<sup>131</sup> there was a split amongst the women along the lines of the Husseini-Nashashibi rivalry, despite protestations to the contrary."<sup>132</sup> Fleischmann increases her speculation with the fact that none of the founding members of either group were alive by the time she conducted her research to help clarify the situation. She adds: "one can only conclude that the women were not 'above' politics, and, as we shall see, most of their activities were infused with the policy, even when they engaged in charitable work. After the split, there were two groups: The Arab Women's Union and the Arab lady's society."<sup>133</sup>

Fleischmann also notes that the "plethora of names in the sources confuses attempts to reconstruct the history of the women's movement during this period, particularly when one tries to trace the origins and effects of the split into two organizations."<sup>134</sup> For instance, many references in written

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131. The actual date is difficult to ascertain, since women from the different groups apparently worked together on and off even after the split. See; Fleischmann, E., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>.

132. Fleischmann, E., p.28.

133. Ibid., p.28.

134. Ibid.

sources indicate different names for groups that seem to have been one group. The “Arab Women’s Committee,” the “Arab Ladies Committee,” the “Arab Ladies Society,” and the “Arab Women’s Society” seem to refer to the same group. There have been references in the press mentioning the presumably identical “Executive Committee of the Arab Women” (or “Ladies”) and “Women’s Executive Committee.” The “Arab Women’s Executive in Jerusalem,” according to Mاتي Mughannam, replaced the “Arab Women’s Committee.”<sup>135</sup>

The term *Ēttihād Nisāi*’ (Women’s Union) was not used until after 1938, Fleishmann confirms.<sup>136</sup>

One can determine that, in reality, there was one major women’s organization in Jerusalem that “operated under all of the various names.” The Women’s Executive Committee was the first nucleus of this movement, and it was later transformed into a broader organization that continued to be dominated by the more prominent members of the Executive Committee.<sup>137</sup>

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135. There is some confusion in the sources about when Sakakini became involved in the movement and therefore whether she was a member of the AWE. Several scholars claim that it was she and Shihabi who founded the Palestinian women’s union in 1921, but none cites a source. See Abu ‘Ali, *Muqaddimat*, p. 44; Nuha Abu Daleb, “Palestinian Women and Their Role in the Revolution,” *Peoples Mediterranean*, no. 5 (October-December 1978), p. 36; al-Khalili, *alMar’a al-Filastiniyya*, p. 77; Peteet, *Gender in Crisis*, p. 44. See; Fleischmann, E., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

136. *Ibid.*, p.28.

137. *Ibid.*, p.29.

The Arab Women's Association was directly focused on written appeals and protests to the Mandate governors. The appeals were "composed of long, detailed memoranda dealing with the current, urgent issues."<sup>138</sup> Women sent requests about education, discrimination against Arab employees in the civil service, taxation, and relief for the peasantry.

The Arab Women's Association "was founded in 1929 as the first organization bringing Arab women together, following al Burāq riots of the same year. The AWA emerged from the Palestinian Women Congress which appeared on 29th October 1929, with an ambitious set of goals enunciated in its bylaws."<sup>139</sup> It became active in its written protest mostly during the 1930s, when people were detained and imprisoned.

Sources differ on the exact membership of the Jerusalem-dominated AWE. Those who definitely belonged, having been mentioned in more than one source, are Tarab 'Abd al-Hadi, Katrin Dib, Shahinda Duzdar, Fatima al Husayni, Khadija al-Husayni, Na'imati 'Alami al-Husayni, Anisa al-Khadra, Wahida al-Khalidi, Matiel Mogannam, Diya Nashashibi, Zahiyya Nashashibi, Melia Sakakini, Zlikha Shihabi, and Mary Shihada. These women represented an interesting cross section of prominent and not-so-prominent families, the majority from Jerusalem. Indeed, most of the

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138. Ibid.

139. Talhami, G., pp.36-37.

women involved in the women's movement were from the urban, educated, middle, and wealthier classes that constituted the elite in Palestine. They came from families whose men were merchants, landowners, 'ulama, or professionals, such as teachers, lawyers, medical doctors, and civil servants in the Mandate government. A number of women on the AWE were professionals in their own right: Melia Sakakini, for example, was a teacher and school headmistress, and Mary Shihada wrote for her husband's newspaper, *Mirat al-Sharq*.<sup>140</sup>

The intensity of the women's movement and its activities was directly affected by what was happening on the ground in Palestine. The deterioration of the situation resulted in increasingly politicized activities by women, which later became militarized. Women participated in large numbers in 1933 in nationalist demonstrations in the main cities in Palestine. The British government tried to shut the women's movement out of such protests by putting the same "traditional value" pressure on men. They had used the same tactic with earlier protests when people convinced their women not to take to the streets after British pressure and threats. This time, according to a confidential letter from the Higher Commissioner to the Secretary of State dated October 23, 1933, "a new and disquieting feature of this demonstration

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140. Fleischmann, E., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

(in Jerusalem) was the prominent part taken by women from healthy families as well as others.”<sup>141</sup> The police complained that women were troublesome, screaming, kicking against the gates of government offices, and waving handkerchiefs. Women not only participated in Jerusalem demonstrations on that occasion but also traveled to Jaffa for another event the week after. <sup>142</sup>

The 1936 revolution resulted in significant written appeals and protests. Women worked on the ground, on the other hand, relief and support to prisoners and their families. They collected donations and raised funds for clothes and food for detainees, the wounded, and their families.

The activities that women conducted during the eruption of the rebellion in 1936 took a similar form to what Palestinians as a society today would do, and to what they have done in previous confrontations, such as the first intifada. Women took direct roles in the revolution, including militarizing and joining demonstrations. Due to their intellect, women participated in meetings with British politicians and contributed written protests. On the ground, women acceded to a boycott campaign against non-national goods and enforced a boycott on merchants. They raised money for weapons by selling their jewelry, and in some cases donated private funds. In villages, women directly participated as fighters. Some young women students participated in

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141. Fleischmann, E., p. 30.

142. Fleischmann, E., pp.30-31. See also; Annex: Photos #11,12,14,15,16,17.

revolutionary activities by strewing nails in the streets to puncture the tires of military jeeps.<sup>143</sup>

Within the villages on the military fronts, women's participation included providing the fighters with food and smuggling weapons and equipment. Some women worked as informants. Some women participated in the fighting, using guns. Among the famous names that earned a place in women's memories were Sabha al 'Ali, famous for tying bullets around her chest and her back and her waist during the 1936 revolt. Among the stories that entered legend were those about a group of women called Rafikāt al Qassām (Companions of al Qassām), who fought with al Qassām in the 1930s. Other teams were called Kufūf al sawdū' (the black gloves) and Al-Futuwwāt (the masculine). Women were part of the Najāda military party. Another female military group was called Zahret Al Aqhawān<sup>144</sup>, which formed in February 1947 in Jaffā. The movement started as a social change and interfaith movement and later turned into an armed struggle during the Jewish assaults and massacres against Palestinians. Among the women, fighters were the founders Muhiba Khorsheid<sup>145</sup> and Nariman Khorsheid<sup>146</sup>, Abla Fatāyer, Yusra Touqan, Fatima Abu al-Huda, and Yusra Al Barbari. Another group was later founded under the name Munazzamet al-Ard (the Land Organization) and was led by

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143. See: Annex: Photos: #11, 12, 14, 15,16,17.

144. See: Annex: Photos #18,19,20.

145. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Muhiba Khorsheid.

146. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Nariman Khorsheid.

Najla al-Asmar and Juliette Zakka.<sup>147</sup>

All the major cities and towns had fairly active chapters of the AWA/AWU, although the ones that received the most publicity were the Acre, Haifa, Jaffa, Jerusalem, and Nablus branches. The women in the coastal areas were particularly energetic in their work on behalf of detainees, whose numbers swelled during the Arab Revolt. The major detention camp was in Acre, and women from Acre, Haifa, Jaffa, and Ramla were tireless in their efforts to provide food and clothing to prisoners, demand releases and family visits, and protest death sentences. The coastal chapters of the AWA/AWU also were among the most militant. Jaffa women were arrested for curfew violations and sparked massive demonstrations of 5,000 people more than once. The Acre group, which frequently coordinated its activities with the Haifa branch, held lively, massive demonstrations, particularly during the Arab Revolt.<sup>148</sup>

In some schools, girls joined scouts to be trained for military fights. Isam Hamdi Husseini, who lived in Jaffa, Nazareth,

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147. Testimonies of women: ‘Abdel Hadi, Faiḥāī. *Palestinian Women’s Role in the Thirties*, Ramallah: Palestinian Woman Center for Research and Documentation 2005, pg.69-94

148. Fleischmann, E., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

and Gaza, was among the activists in Gaza schools to work on the scout training camps.<sup>149</sup>

Revolutionary activities in the 1930s generated a lot of local and regional media attention. Part of the Arab women's activities was aimed at connecting with other Arab women activists in the region, such as Huda Sha'rawi in Egypt and women's organizations in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.

This period marked a significant evolution in the Palestinian women's movement, from a local Palestinian affair to a regional Arab movement. The support and unity, either in words or actions, helped unify women's positions and enhance their role. In that decade, several Arab women's conferences took place, in Beirut (1930), Syria (1932)<sup>150</sup>, and Baghdad (1932). The major conference, though, was the Eastern Women's Conference to defend Palestine, which was held in Cairo October 15–18, 1938<sup>151</sup>, under the direction of Huda Sha'rawi.<sup>152</sup> On the occasion of the conference, twelve Palestinian women comprised the Palestine delegation, joining delegations of women from Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt.

After the visible achievements of the movement during

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149. Testimonies of women: 'Abdel Hadi, Faiḥā. *Palestinian Women's Role in the Thirties*, Ramallah: Palestinian Woman Center for Research and Documentation 2005, pg.69-94

150. See: photo #1.

151. See: Photo # 2,3.

152. Fleishman, E. PASSIA: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of ... (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://www.passia.org/jerusalem/publications/J\\_wom\\_orgitish\\_man\\_txt.htm](http://www.passia.org/jerusalem/publications/J_wom_orgitish_man_txt.htm)

the conference, the Arab Women Association (AWA) split officially into two groups. Political factionalism was the result of that division, with the Arab Women Union (AWU) allying with the Husseini faction and the Arab Women's Association with the Nashashibi faction.<sup>153</sup> Competition between Zleikha Shihābi and Zahiya Nashashibi for the presidency of the AWA also contributed to the split. The Jerusalem branch of the AWA kept its name and worked alongside other women's unions that were formed as a result of the division of the AWA. Consequently, the Arab Women Union led by Zleikha Shihābi<sup>154</sup> was more of a political organization, while the others focused on charity.<sup>155</sup>

It is clear from the substance of the women's correspondence and contacts with the government that they were extremely well-informed about daily political developments as well as about the internal machinations of British diplomacy and Mandate politics. A distinctive attribute of the AWE was the connection between it and the (male) Arab Executive, which led the national movement until its dissolution in 1934 and subsequent

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153. Whatever the causes, it would appear that the AWU, aligned with the Husayni faction, evolved into the more "political" of the two groups [40] and that it was this group that subsequently played the dominant role. At all events, despite the breach, actual enmity and hostility were muted, at least publicly, and women from both groups continued to work together. See: Fleischmann, E., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

154. See: annex: Photos # 10.

155. Fleischmann, E., p.33.

replacement by the Arab Higher Committee. Five women on the AWE were married to members of the Arab Executive: Tarab ‘Abd al-Hadi (‘Auni), Na’imati alHusayni (Jamal), Anisa al-Khadra (Subhi), Matiel Mogannam (Mughannam), and Mary Shihada (Bulos). Melia Sakakini, who was unmarried, was the sister of Khalil Sakakini, also a member of the Arab Executive. The president of the AWE, Wahida al-Khalidi, was the wife of Husayn Fakhri al Khalidi, elected mayor of Jerusalem in 1934 and a member of the Arab Higher Committee as of its creation in 1936. Other women were married to government officials who had access to power and information. Later, during the Arab Revolt, some of the women’s husbands were imprisoned and/or exiled by the British.<sup>156</sup>

Another group, which started in the early 1940s but became visible after the Nakba, was al tadāmon al nisāi. It is not known who started the group and when, but Mufida Dabbagh<sup>157</sup> is one of the women who helped in the establishment.<sup>158</sup> Women interviewed in Faiḥāi ‘Abdel Hadi’s investigation on Palestinian Women’s Role in the forties and fifties gave differing testimonies regarding its establishment. What is certain is that the association had multiple branches,

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156. Fleischmann, E. <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

157. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Mufida Dabbagh.

158. From Dr. Fadwa Labadi.

and women in each branch knew details of the office she came from. Jārallah sisters, Sara, Samia, and Rifqa started the society in Jaffa at the beginning. The main office was in Jerusalem and was affiliated with the prominent female Egyptian doctor Duriya Shafik. The organization worked on women's empowerment mainly through lectures and workshops focused on raising awareness and developing skills. Among the women who headed the society were Lulu Abu al-Huda from Jerusalem and Nadiyyah Rassas, a teacher who recruited other teachers to join. Duriya Shafik was a leading figure of the Egyptian women's movement.

The photo used in this research, as mentioned earlier, was taken, when Huda Sha'rawi came to Jerusalem to mobilize for the conference in 1945.

One can come to an understanding from the above-mentioned demonstration to the formation and development of the different societies, and later the evolvement of the women's movement, that the women's movement was a consequence of an eventual strong buildup of charitable organizations that worked and focused on different needs to the Palestinian society with an explicit focus on women. The awareness of the needs women required at that time, as well as the community as a whole, helped create a strong mindset in the women leadership that was as well evolving as a consequence of such work, which also required involvement in different societal needs, that naturally included the changes in the political situation.

The various affiliates of the women's movement were organizationally fluid and eclectic. Many local women's organizations predated the 1929 congress. But the momentum of the congress resulted in conscious attempts to affiliate these already existing groups with the movement-initially as represented by the AWA-and to help found new chapters. The Jerusalem women, for example, dispatched a delegation to Nazareth in 1930 to help establish a group there, while the Haifa women's group traveled to Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarem in 1935 to do the same.<sup>159</sup>

The political situation forced a growth in the national sentiments and consequently made the women more involved in the needs that were encountered as the political situation continued to go towards unknown directions and results.

The extensive work in humane societies gave the women a more realistic sense of needs and created a better connection with the society between its different classes. Women who were leading such communities have seemingly realized the capacity that was inside women themselves, which entitled the societies to move adequately towards the steps of women's movement that fitted the criteria of emerging movements. With a political situation that was leaving the community with no options but a continued state of occupation and

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159. Fleischmann, E., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

despair, women in such positions found their roles to become more meaningful to the general societal need in the face of the hidden political agendas in preparation.

As a result, from the beginning of the formation and development of the women's movement, women have decided to claim their rights on two inseparable lines within what will remain a Palestinian plight for liberation; moving forward modernity with an increase of education and openness to the region and the world, but yet preserved the cultural and traditional customs of the society. And Aligning with a national political agenda, in which they proved that their involvement was positive and significant, but yet continued to align themselves with men's political activism.

## 7. Women's Writers and their contribution

Beyond the educational field, and later the effective participation in charitable societies and political activism, Palestinian women began to play a significant role in the press and other media toward the end of the Ottoman period and the beginning of the British Mandate.

Focusing on women's writings, and, as Abu Lughod puts it:

The rediscovery of women's writings and the analysis of the active women's press, ...have enabled feminist scholars to shift their attention from the prominent male reformers to the many women who were active participants in the shaping of the new discourses on women.<sup>160</sup>

Undoubtedly, such studies allow us, also in confirmation with Abu Lughod,

To see women more clearly as a diverse group of individuals who thought about, argued for, and managed to transform women's lives in colonial ambiguities and contradictions that rendered any simple story impossible.<sup>161</sup>

The press in Palestine started in 1908 after the formation of the Ottoman Constitution. Before that, the population had relied on the media outlets in Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo.

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160. Abu Lughod, L., p.6.

161. Ibid.

In 1908, al-Carmel was among the pioneering newspapers in Palestine. Najeeb Nassār from Haifa headed it. Isa al-Isa, from Jaffa, created Filastin Paper in 1911. The Palestinian media played a major role in reflecting the Palestinian and Arab attitudes toward the Arab awakening, the Zionist threat, and the British Mandate. Another pioneering publication was the magazine Al Asmaī, started by ‘Abdullahal-Isa in 1908 and edited by Khalil Sakakini. In the same year, Al Nafa’es al ‘Asriyā was started by Khalil Beidas in Haifa and recruited many journalists.

Women’s participation in Palestinian media was influenced by pioneering women writers and activists in Cairo and Lebanon. Al Carmel was a major outlet for females while Sadhij Nassār, the wife of Najeeb Nassār, served as the editor in chief between 1941 and 1944. Mary Sarouf Shehadeh, the wife of owner Boulos Shehadeh, wrote and edited for Mir’at al-Sharq. The Filastin Paper established a “social affairs” section that focused on societal and women’s issues until 1948. There were also; Paper of al Jāmi’a al-Arabiya (The Arab University), Al Jāmi’a al Islāmiya (The Islamic University), Al Sirāt al Mustaqīm and al Difā’ (The Defense). Magazines such as al-Zahra discussed women’s affairs in the context of Arab culture and social change.

Jerusalem during the Mandate period was the capital of Mandate Palestine and was the country’s most socially and politically active city. During that time, more than ninety-nine newspapers covered politics, literature, economics, and youth affairs. Early on, women wrote anonymously. Fikriyeh

Sidqi, from Al Quds school, wrote for Filastin Paper under the pseudonym Qariah (“a reader”). Sidqi also wrote under the pseudonym “a searcher in the desert.” May Ziyadeh, the pseudonym “a searcher in the desert. Ether with Manara Thebī and others. Female Palestinian writers encouraged Palestinian women to work on their advancement step by step and empower themselves. Fikriyeh Sidqi was the first woman to attend a lecture at the YMCA for the author Amin Riana, who resided in Haifa. Her presence at that conference as the only woman, sitting next to men, made a daring example and became the topic of newspaper attention. Fikriyeh was described as the liberal Palestinian girl.

Another woman who was revolutionary was Fatima Fahmi, who called for women to write in the newspaper Al Jāmi’a al- ‘Arabiya.

In an article published by Al Dustour Newspaper in 2008, in commemoration of the Nakba in 2008, and about ‘Ayda Najjar’s book “Press of Palestine and the National Movement in Half a Century: 1900-1948”, an interesting briefing on women’s contribution is mentioned.<sup>162</sup> Since 1926, al-Carmel Newspaper had a dedicated a section, under the title “Women’s Paper”, to discussing women’s issues in articles written by both men and females. Among the well-known writers were Sadhij Nassār<sup>163</sup>, was sent for a one year in prison for her political activities against oppression

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162. Najjar, A. *In memory of Nakba*.

163. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Sadhij Nassar.

during the British Mandate period; Mary Shehadeh<sup>164</sup>, who was a columnist for *Mir'at al-Sharq* (Mirror of the East); and Mufida Dabbagh, who supervised the “Woman’s Program” radio broadcast. Raīda Jārallah, Fatima Husseini<sup>165</sup>, Zleikha Shihābi, Anbara Khalidi, Asma Toubi<sup>166</sup>, Samira Azzām,<sup>167</sup> Kalthūm Nasser, and Julia al Soūl were active participants and contributors to the newspapers of that period.<sup>168</sup>

Orjwan al Fār, Asen Nicola Shamāt, Olga Malīk, Henrietta ‘Azar, Vera ‘Azar, René Habayeb, and Alice and Angel Sayegh were also prominent writers.<sup>169</sup>

The outspread of the press and the presence of women’s writers should not also be reflected or understood as a mark of modernization. On the contrary, in some areas, as in the case of Egypt, women writers were used as a tool to maintain traditions and Islamic culture employed by Islamist press. Islamist press indicated how “the sphere of women was localized as an area of backwardness to be reformed, regenerated, and uplifted for the benefit of the nation.”<sup>170</sup>

We can note that women’s participation in the press and writing, was in line with the evolving need of the society. Women’s writers did not seem to be disillusioned from the

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164. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Mary Shihadeh.

165. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Fatima Husseini.

166. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Asma Toubi.

167. See: Annexes: Women Biographical Appendix: Samira Azzam.

168. Ibid.

169. Ibid.

170. Abu Lughod, L. p10.

situation, both political and social. They demonstrated their role in that of a constructive elaboration on the needs of women in a society that was as well reflective and critical.

As mentioned earlier, the intellectual culture was taking a good shape in the Palestinian Literal Saloons. Intellectuals, as we note from the amount and diverse backgrounds of the women writers were not restricted to those women known to the intelligent saloons that were mostly hosting and attracting a particular class in the society.

In the Index of the Literary Texts (fahras al Nusous Al Adabiya) in Filastin Paper (Jarīdet Filastīn) from 1911 to 1967, Q. Shomali tracks all the poetry, literature, prose, educational articles, critical essays, and novels written by writers for Palestine Paper from 1911 to 1967.

As mentioned earlier, after the announcement of the constitution in 1908, a significant change occurred in schools and the education system. As a result, in a new movement occurred that included an increase in cultural development that included the spread of libraries and printing houses and media. With printing remaining prominent in Jerusalem since its first establishment in 1846, and it was covered in 1908. Media which entered Palestine in 1876, with the publishing of the official paper, al-Quds Al Sharif, in both Arabic and Turkish, triggered the birth of more than thirty articles between 1908 and 1917 around the cities including Jerusalem. Actually, the production of scientific and literacy as well as religion material was promoted.

Press, media, and writing required libraries, printing houses, as well as Newspapers. Books in that period were present in a noticeable way. ‘Ayda Najjar, in her *Bint al Shalabiya*, writes about books and culture in Jerusalem. Among the libraries were the Arab College Library (est. 1920), al-Aqsa mosque library (est.1927), the library of the broadcasting affairs in the government of Palestine (1936), the French Institute Library (1937), the British Council library (1944), and the library of Qalam al Matbou’at in Government of Palestine. Among the libraries of families were al-Khalidiyyeh library, which belonged to Sheikh Khalil Khalidi; Is’af Nashashibi library; Musa Ishāq al Husseini library; Jaralla’s library; Budeiri library; Turjmān library; Qutteineh library; and al Fakhriyā library, which belonged to the Abu Suoud family. Among the recorded recollections was the memory of Bayān Nuweihed, who witnessed the theft of her father’s library in Baq’ā during the Nakba.<sup>171</sup>

It is important to note that, one cannot determine if all of the writers were Palestinians since the Arab world was part of the larger Ottoman Empire.

In the “Index of literary texts of Filastin Paper,” women are represented. One would not say that their presence was overwhelming, but they were undoubtedly present, and, surprisingly, no less so than today.

Almost forty women writers in different fields of literature actively participated in Filastin Paper between 1910 and the

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171. Najjar, A. *Bint Al Shalabiya*, pp.61-62.

1940s.

Such participations and articles can give us a better look at the question of modernity. The topics women used and discussed can express the reality between what might be understood as a colonial modernity affect and positive transformation within the women's movement and the society.

The questions about the politics of modernity, especially as the ones Abu Lughod puts:

How new ideas and practices considered modern and progressive implanted in Europe's colonies or simply taken up by emerging local elites might usher in not only forms of emancipation but new ways of social control.<sup>172</sup>

Women contributed to articles that ranged from poetry to literature to politics. For the sake of space, the titles of the writings are written in the footnotes below. From the titles we can learn a lot about women and the political and social as well as cultural context. The question of modernity in this sense can contradict writings that preached traditions and preservations of social behaviors that were related to religious and traditional customs. At the same time, we could observe women who were influenced by the West and its construction of modernity, and even though we could not trace directly bold messages on certain traditional customs, we can relate to such influence in the choice of translations

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172. Abu Lughod, L. p.6.

women focused on.

The question of class in the women's writings can also be noted. It was not women from the elite class trying to add a certain polish to their lifestyles in line with modern clichés that could have been integrated as a consequence of colonialism. The speech of women in writing has a particular identity that is needless to say "Palestinian" and to many extents "Arab." Women seem to be very aware in the political context. Nationalism is strongly reflected, and in many places, we notice strong conventional messages from different writers. The variety of the background of the authors is an important testimony of the diversity in what became a movement within the rise of education and societies amid women in Palestine.

Thus, the tricky tasks in this, as Abu Lughod puts it, is

How to be skeptical of modernity's progressive claims of emancipation and critical of its social and cultural operations and yet appreciate the forms of energy, possibility, an even power that aspects of it might have enabled, in particular for women.<sup>173</sup>

In Poetry and literature writings, articles written by Fawziyeh Salāmeḥ, Ni'meh al Sabbāgh, Fadwa Touqān, Mary 'Ajami,

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173. Abu Lughod, L., p.12.

Ni'mat Allah Farḥat and Salma Mansūr.<sup>174</sup>

174. the following names were mentioned in the Index (literature):

- Fawziyeh Salāmeḥ 21-10-1938 (p. 61-62)
  - Ni'meh al Sabbāgh 16-3-1944, 19-3-1944, 23-3-1944, 9-4-1944, 13-4-1944, 27-4-1944 (p. 71-72)
  - Fadwa Touqān 1-10-1933, 16-12-1934, 16-6-1935, 3-12-1941, 1-1-1943, 18-4-1943...1963. (p. 75)
  - Mary 'Ajami 17-12-1928, 27-11-1932, 7-7-1935, 15-9-1935, 6-4-1947 (p. 83)
  - Ni'mat Allah Farḥat 19-7-1934 (p. 96)
  - Salma Mansūr 7-5-1944 (p. 113)
- the following names were mentioned in the Index (Poetry):
- 'Afaf al Jū in 26-5-1927, 4-6-1927 (p. 142-143) article title: "Respect of Woman is a Must")
  - Salwa Zayadīn 12-4-1951
  - Mai Ziyadeh 1-1-1932 (woman in the view of Taghour) (p. 158)
  - Mary Shiḥadeh 23-6-1931, 1-1-1932, 30-10-1932 (woman and her effect in social aspects, problem of marriage, woman talks to man) (p. 162-163)
  - Asma Tūbi, 10-10-1931, 28-10-1931, 19-4-1934, 7-6-1935, 19-11-1947, 27-6-1952, 13-8-1954 (a nationalist respectable woman responds, she and us, man and woman in life, women's council, between two decades, nations classes: how they celebrate their weddings, women in Arab history. (p. 168-169)
  - Fayzeh 'Abdel Majīd 12-3-1939, 5-3-1944, 30-12-1947, 26-8-1956, 26-8-1956, 6-1-1966, 14-5-1966 (problem of orphans, in public life, Arab woman in the Palestinian struggle, biggest problem is the refugee problem, woman's work is a nationalist essence, through the women council in Cairo. (p. 171-172)
  - Margaret Qattān 29-9-1935 (in the land of Najashi) (p. 180)
  - Sabiḥa Miqdādi 29-5-1931 (woman's education and her upbringing) (p. 186-187)
  - Widād al Khouri Maqdisī 19-5-1927 (holy lands) (p. 187)
  - Sara al Muhiba 7-2-1912, 28-2-1912, 13-4-1912, 12-6-1912, 22-6-1912 (p. 187-188)

Also in the cultural affairs, women such as ‘Afaf Al Jū, Salwa Zayadīn, Mai Ziyadeh, Mary Shiḥadeh, Asma Toubi, Fayzeh ‘Abdel Majīd, Margaret Qattān, Sabiḥa Miqdādi, Widād al Khouri Maqdisī, and Sara al Muhiba contributed to the different editions of the Newspaper and were quite active writers.

In critical writing, women also effectively participated. Among the active writers were May Ziyadeh, Fayzeh Abdel

Majid, and Margaret Qattan.<sup>175</sup>

The index also revealed reflective writings of women, whereas, many women's names were mentioned, such as Salwa Khalidi, Antoinette Khoury, Asma Toubi, Fayzeh Abdel Majid, Naheel Farah, Mary Ajami, Sama Mansur,

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175. the following names were mentioned in the Index (Critical):

- Mai Ziyadeh 30-3-1938, 29-11-1941 (respect your language, three hours on the eastern side) (p. 278-279)
- Fayzeh 'Abdel Majīd 31-3-1938, 25-3-1949, 26-2-1966 (the fabulous may, literature creates miracles, literature and the undefeatable human) (p. 292-293)
- Margaret Qattān 2-6-1927, 30-6-1935, 14-7-1935, 17-7-1935, 4-8-1935, 30-10-1935 (p. 303-304)

the following names were mentioned in the Index (reflections):

- Salwa Khalidi 21-2-1948 (woman's voice in the holy Nidal) (p. 349)
- Antoinette Khoury 20-1-1944, 5-2-1944, 21-4-1946, 7-1-1947, 13-4-1947 (p. 353)
- (First name not given) Sheriff 22-3-1936, 2-1-1940, 14-2-1942, 21-2-1942 until 1944 (her first article is called "Thaira")
- Asma Tūbi 18-11-33, 24-6-1934, 30-6-1935, 17-7-1935, 19-1-1936, 15-3-1938, 30-11-1938, 8-2-1939, 3-5-1939, 6-8-1939, 10-7-1943, 3-10-1943, 13-11-1943, 27-11-1943, 11-12-1943, 1-1-1944 (p. 381-384) (a long list of articles)
- Fayzeh 'Abdel Majīd (p. 387-388) a good amount of articles between 1948 and 1966
- Mary Ajami 8-5-1928 (deceit of self) (p. 389)
- Naheel Farah 9-3-1942, 7-11-1943, 1-1-1944, 13-2-1944, 30-2-1944, 5-3-1944 (p. 402)
- Salma Mansūr 12-9-1943 (long list from 1943-1944) (p. 416)
- Julia Elias 12-2-1933 hidden writing on the wall (p. 436)
- Jamīleh 'Alayli 20-4-1938, 26-5-1938 (p. 457-458) (a dream comes true, the wonderer –episodes)

Julia Elias and Jamileh Alayli.<sup>176</sup>

The topics women used were diverse and included women's issues, but were not limited to those shown in the list. We can also note that women writers were not necessarily active women in the organizations or the political movements. Women who wrote were also not coming only from the elite class. Such women were part of the formation of the new middle class in the Palestinian society that was intellectual and educated. A class that helped bridge the differences of classes in the society with an emerging need for a common national agenda that guides the changing political realities that the population continued to encounter.

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176. The following names were mentioned in the Index (reflections):

- Salwa Khalidi 21-2-1948 (woman's voice in the holy Nidal) (p. 349)
  - Antoinette Khoury 20-1-1944, 5-2-1944, 21-4-1946, 7-1-1947, 13-4-1947 (p. 353)
  - (First name not given) Sheriff 22-3-1936, 2-1-1940, 14-2-1942, 21-2-1942 until 1944 (her first article is called "Thaira")
  - Asma Tūbi 18-11-33, 24-6-1934, 30-6-1935, 17-7-1935, 19-1-1936, 15-3-1938, 30-11-1938, 8-2-1939, 3-5-1939, 6-8-1939, 10-7-1943, 3-10-1943, 13-11-1943, 27-11-1943, 11-12-1943, 1-1-1944 (p. 381-384) (a long list of articles)
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  - Salma Mansūr 12-9-1943 (long list from 1943-1944) (p. 416)
  - Julia Elias 12-2-1933 hidden writing on the wall (p. 436)
- Jamīleh 'Alayli 20-4-1938, 26-5-1938 (p. 457-458) (a dream comes true, the wonderer –episodes)

Another important link that the Press made with women movement, was the attention women brought after their demonstrations. The Press gave women a stronger voice and empowered them. They realized that they could stimulate the public opinion, both locally and internationally. In many ways one can agree with Fleischmann that; “As of 1935-36, as the strength of the women’s movement developed, women increasingly staged their own, large, segregated demonstrations. This might have been an attempt to attract larger crowds of women to sex-segregated demonstrations, thus dramatizing the events and increasing their impact”<sup>177</sup>

The women showed considerable sophistication in their use of the press, dramatizing their movement through, among other things, repeatedly emphasizing the novelty of women engaged in certain activities for the “first” time. The press eagerly picked up on this. Press reports of the 1929 congress, for example, all heralded the event as “the first time in history” Arab women had organized a women’s congress or entered the world of politics. Such phrasing came to distinguish the discourse about women in every situation, and articles proliferated about the “first Muslim woman dentist,” the “first Arab woman to be conferred with the honor of arrest in Palestine,” “the first time an Arab

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177. Fleischmann, E., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

lady addressed [a particular] club,” “the first time that Tulkarm ladies demonstrated,” “the first time that Arab women in this district [Beersheba] shared men’s struggle,” and so forth.<sup>178</sup>

What remains impressive, and maybe worthy of investigation in the future, is the mentioning and dealing with women-related topics, which will also be addressed in the section of men’s effect on the women’s movement.

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178. Fleischmann,  
fulltext/40801

E.,

<http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/>

## **8. Biographical Appendix of Women Activists**

The aim of this research implied a focus on the women in the Photo. The research, however, encountered, also, women who participated and were a significant part of the rise and development of the women's movement during that period and were not in the Photo. Many women were active in the creation of the women movement and participated in related events to the Council of Women prior and after Huda Sha'rawi's visit on the occasion of the Photo.

As the research developed, the names of the following women were also mentioned on different occasions and often in more than one resource. Their contribution might not be sufficiently addressed in the following appendix. The aim is to shed light on these women and find possible information on them when possible. There were occasions where I was not able to find any information about the women (from the Photo). The women on this list contributed to the formation of a female movement in Palestine and were active in that period, and most of them were connected to the event of the Women Council and its preparations and results. The biographies are listed, using the age as a category of order (year of birth). The Information remains limited. In some place, it was not possible to even find the date of birth to some women.

**Nabīha Nasser**<sup>179</sup> (1890<sup>180</sup>-1951), born in Birzeit. She established the first girls' high school in Birzeit in 1924, which later became the first Palestinian university to be established, Birzeit University. Nasser was part of the women delegation to Cairo in 1938,<sup>181</sup> and gave a speech on Arabism and unity, and focused on education.<sup>182</sup> She participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.<sup>183</sup>

**Sadhij Nassār**<sup>184</sup>(1882- 1963)<sup>185</sup> born in Acre. Sadhij worked as an editor in al-Carmel. She was the first Palestinian journalist to enter jail during the British period. She was sentenced to a year in prison on March 1939,<sup>186</sup> And she was accused of being “a very dangerous woman” by the British. Her husband wrote what looks prominent in today's patriarchal world of Arabs when he said: “if al-Carmel didn't

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179. See: Annex: Photo # 75,63.

180. According to this source; Taghyeer, funded by Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Nabihah Nasser was born in 1890. <http://mappingher.ps/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/نبيهه-ناصر.png>

181. See: Annex: Photo # 2, 3 and #9.

182. <http://mappingher.ps/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/نبيهه-ناصر.png>

Also, according to this site: <http://www.palwp.ps/index.php/2015-07-01-19-27-38/42-2015-07-18-19-47-26> <http://www.albuss.net/2016/10/1882-1963.html> . Source: emtiaz Nahhal

Other resources mention that she was born in 1891. See: <http://palestine.assafir.com/Article.aspx?ArticleID=3171>

183. Najjar, A., pp.322-326, 135-136.

184. See Annex: Photo # 74.

185.

186. In another source, she was sent to prison in 1938 in Bethlehem. See: <http://www.palestinapedia.net/نجيب-ناصر-١٨٦٥-١٩٤٨/>

make me enter history, I would join it because of my wife, who is the first woman who is sentenced in British jails.”<sup>187</sup> Sadjij’s father was a prominent Baha’i leader and Sheikh . She worked at al-Carmel paper that was published in Haifa in 1908. Sadjij was also in charge of editing the woman’s section in the newspaper in 1926 (Sahifat al Nisā’) She started in the thirties a free paper under the name of “Risālet al-Carmel,” and she became the editor in chief for al-Carmel al jadīd between 1941-1944.<sup>188</sup>

In 1929, Nassār headed the Arab Women Union convention in Jerusalem. She was active in the Cairo meetings in 1938.<sup>189</sup> Among the well known moments are also, Nassar’s continuation of the speech on behalf of a Qassām in the convention of 1938 when the Maimana was emotionally overwhelmed as she was giving a speech about her father.<sup>190</sup>

**Tarab S. ‘Abdel Hadi** (1882-1970). She was an activist. The first Palestinian woman council was held in her house. She was in the leadership of the demonstration that took place in protest to the British violence and the Zionist immigration.

Tarab contributed to the establishment of some of the Palestinian women organizations to save Jerusalem that

187. <https://palmuseum.wordpress.com/2016/03/16/international-womens-day-يوم-المرأة-العالمي-/>

188. [http://emtiazalnahhal.blogspot.com/2013/11/blog-post\\_22.html](http://emtiazalnahhal.blogspot.com/2013/11/blog-post_22.html) See Also: Najjar, 242-246

189. See: Annex: Photo #2,3,10,11,12

190. الدكتور سيد بن حسين العفاني، زهر البساتين من مواقف العلماء والريانيين الجزء الثالث . دار العفاني، القاهرة، ص ٦٣

was headed by Suleiman Nabulsi.<sup>191</sup> Tarab was among the founders of the Palestinian Women Union.<sup>192</sup>

Tarab was the wife of ‘Awni ‘Abdelhadi, a prominent leader who participated in the Palestinian revolution. She was also the daughter of Salim ‘Abdelhadi who was executed by Jamal Pasha in 1915 Tarab was a renowned activist who was known for her resistance to the British occupation and the Zionist expansion and led the first demonstration against Belfour Promise in 1929. She has involved in smuggling weapon and food as well as clothes to the revolutionists on camels through the mountains. She was also active in collecting funds for revolutionist during that period ( 1933-1936) She headed the Palestinian delegation to the first Arab council that was held in Cairo, in 1938.<sup>193</sup>

**Mai Ziyadeh**<sup>194</sup> (1886-1941), born in Nazareth and moved with her parents to Lebanon. A renowned writer who lived in Cairo and was a pioneer in women’s outspoken feminine figure. She hosted the most famous literary Salon in the Arab world during the twenties and thirties in Cairo. Mai was not to be considered in the same line of Huda Sha’rawi as a feminist, as much as more of ‘woman of letters’ rather

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191. نحال زعرب، امتياز. (٢٠١٣)، فلسطينيات، وجوه نسائية معاصرة. 191.

[http://emtiaznahhal.blogspot.com/٠٧/٢٠١٢/blog-post.١٢\\_html](http://emtiaznahhal.blogspot.com/٠٧/٢٠١٢/blog-post.١٢_html).

192. ‘Abdel Hadi, F.

193. نحال زعرب، امتياز. (٢٠١٣)، فلسطينيات، وجوه نسائية معاصرة. دار المقداد.

للطباعة. غزة، فلسطين

[http://emtiaznahhal.blogspot.com/٠٧/٢٠١٢/blog-post.١٢\\_html](http://emtiaznahhal.blogspot.com/٠٧/٢٠١٢/blog-post.١٢_html).

See :Annex :Photo :٧٠ , ١٢ , ١٣ , ١١ , ٨ , ٩ , ١٠ , ٤ , ٣ , ٢ #

194. See: Annex: Photo #66

than a social reformer. However, she was part of the Arab women movement. She was interested in tackling ignorance and anachronistic traditions. Mai was a strong believer in the major role of the women in the society and not just for household activities.

In 1921, she convened a conference under the heading, "The goal of life," where she called upon Arab women to aspire toward freedom, and she stressed on the Eastern origins of Arabs. Her writings continue to represent the ideals of the first wave of Lebanese feminism. She believed in liberating women and the first wave focused on doing just that through education, receiving voting rights, and finally having representation in government.<sup>195</sup>

She is also known for her exchange letters with Jubran Khalil Jubran. She spoke six languages and wrote in both Arabic and French. She also wrote sometimes in English and Italian.

Mai's first published work, *Fleurs de rêve* (1911), was a volume of poetry that was written in French under the pen name of Isis Copia. She published works of criticism and biography, volumes of free-verse poetry and essays, and novels. She translated several European authors into Arabic. Some of her works include: *Al Bâhithat el-Bâdiya* ("Seeker in the Desert," pen name of Malak Hifni Naser), *Sawâneh fatât* (Platters of Crumbs), *Zulumât wa Ichâ'ât* (Humiliation and Rumors), *Kalimât wa Ichârât* (Words and Signs), *Al*

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195. Middle East Revised (2014) Remembering May Ziadeh <https://middleeastrevised.com/2014/10/30/remembering-may-ziadeh-ahead-of-her-time/>

Saha'ef<sup>1</sup> (The Newspapers), Ghayat Al-Hayât (The Meaning of Life), Al-Musâwât (Equality), Bayna l-Jazri wa l-Madd (Between the Ebb and Flow).<sup>196</sup>

Mai was the editor in chief of her newspaper. Her fate was not as inspiring as her intelligence. She spent many years in a psychiatric hospital in Beirut as a result of custody and inheritance issues by her relatives.<sup>197</sup>

**Fatima Al Yashratiyah** (1890-1979), born in Acre. A famous woman in Sufi traditions. She had her Sufi tact and followers and left many books as a source to the Sufi tract. Among her books Attariq ila il Haq (1954), Nafahat al Haq (1962), Mawaheb al Haq (1965).<sup>198</sup> Fatima was the daughter of a renowned Sheikh, Ali Noor Eddin al Yashrati, the Shadhily.<sup>199</sup>

**Milia Sakakini** (1890-1966), born in Jerusalem. Together with Zleikha Shihâbi, Milia organized campaigns to promote female education in helping them read and write.<sup>200</sup> Milia was among the starters of the Arab Women. She was among the women's delegation that paid a visit to the British High Commissioner.<sup>201</sup> Milia became the president of the Arab Women's Union that was established by her and Zleikha

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196. Stephan, R. (2014) *Four Waves of Lebanese Feminism*. <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/11/07/four-waves-of-lebanese-feminism/>

197. <https://www.abijad.com/author/6805395/مي-ز-يادة/>. See also, Najjar, A., pp.270-272.

198. <http://al-hakawati.net/arabic/arabpers/women2.asp> See also: Najjar, p.288.

199. See: Annex: Photo # 76.

200. <http://www.wafainfo.ps/persons.aspx?id=444>

201. See: Annex: Photo # 12.

Shihābi in 1921. Milia was among the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem and appears in the photo.<sup>202</sup> Milia was the sister of Khalil Sakakini.<sup>203</sup>

**Adele Azar**, born in Jaffa. She founded the Orthodox Ladies Society of Jaffa in 1910, with the intention of assisting orphaned and disadvantaged girls to receive an education. Adele served as the president of the society, and she was also the principal of the Orthodox Girls' School. Among the teachers who worked at the school were: Najla Mousa, Souria Battikha. Adele was among the delegation

that met Huda Sha'rawi and appears in the Photo.<sup>204</sup> In 11/5/1936, Adele headed two meetings for the Arab Women Society in Jaffa, that included more than 400 women. In that meeting, they approved the Upper Higher Commission to support the strike.<sup>205</sup>

**Kalthūm 'Odeh**<sup>206</sup> (1892-1965), born in Nazareth. A writer and an activist. Kalthūm story could be exceptionally different since she contributed to her Palestinian plight while she was in Russia. She wrote to Stalin and protested against the Zionist movement, which led to her imprisonment. She studied in her early life in the Russian school in Beit Jala and

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202. Najjar, A. pp.201-207.

203. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/2015/5/20/ميلييا-السكاكيني/>  
See also; Annex: Photo # 31,52, 62.

204. Najjar, A., pp. 204-205.

See also, Annex: Photo # 78.

205. <http://www.palestinapedia.net/السيدات-العربيات-اجتماع/>

206. See: Annex: Photo # 73.

married to a Russian. <sup>207</sup>

**Ni'mati 'Alami Hussein** (1895- 1982), Ni'mati was among the founders the Women Arab Movement in 1929. She was among the women activists and participated in meetings and the demonstrations along the late 20s and the 30s. Ni'mati spoke four languages along with Arabic. She appears in the photo with the women's delegation with Huda Sha'rawi.<sup>208</sup> She was the wife of Jamāl Hussein and mother of Serene Hussein Shahid. She was the daughter of Faidi Alami the mayor of Jerusalem in 1906, and the sister of Mūsa 'Alami who was a major figure in the political activism on the Palestinian sphere in that period.<sup>209</sup>

**Anbara Salām Khalidi** (1897- 1986), was born in Beirut She lived in

Beirut until she moved to Jerusalem with her husband Ahmad Samih Khalidi at the age of thirty. As a girl, she grew up within the strict culture of closure on women and firm Islamic teaching, and women inside it were still nothing but complimentary. Maybe, women political participation and resistance roles took a faster development than that of their personal rights. She was highly appreciated by the time she was less than twenty, a main public figure in education and women's rights, she would make a speech in front of

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207. [http://www.marefa.org/index.php/فاسيليڤا\\_عودة\\_كلثوم](http://www.marefa.org/index.php/فاسيليڤا_عودة_كلثوم) See also: Najjar, A., pp. 265-270.

See also; Annex: Photo # 73.

208. Hussein, S.

209. Najjar, A., pp.201-207, 312. See also; Annex: Photo # 54, 55, 56.

generals and kings, but all with her face veiled. People would applaud highly for her courage and outstanding commitment, but on the day she dared to make a speech without a veil, riots went out against her, and she was and her family the topic of societal criticism that occupied them more than the occupying colonial forces. She was committed to charity work and women rights. She participated in the first women Congress in Cairo in Jerusalem she continued to take part in women movement and was active. She was among the women who received Huda Sha'rawi during her historic visit to Jerusalem. She translated the Iliad and the Odyssey into Arabic.<sup>210</sup>

**Matiel Mughannam** (1900-1987).<sup>211</sup> Matiel moved to Jerusalem with her husband in 1921. She was very active in the Palestinian liberal movement in the thirties and wrote numerous articles. She founded the Cultural Club in Jerusalem. On April 15th, 1933 and while protesting the visit of Lord Allenby and Lord Swanton to Jerusalem. Palestinian women walked on a dark rainy day and walked through Omar Mosque opposite to the Holy Sepulcher. Where Matiel made a speech, and the march went to the sacred tomb where Tarab 'Abdel Hadi made a statement. Mughannam is the author of *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem* (1937). She attended the Cairo Conference in 1933.<sup>212</sup> She

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210. Khalidi, A. See also: Najjar, A., pp. 285-288.

See also, Annex: Photo # 58,

211. According to Fleischmann's *the nation and its new Women*, Matiel died in 1992 in the U.S.

212. Khalidi Walid, *before their Diaspora*. Pg 101.

joined the Defense party with her husband. Upon moving to Ramallah in 1939, she founded the Ramallah Women's Union and became the president until she immigrated to the United States in the 1950s.<sup>213</sup> She appears in the photo with Huda Sha'rawi.<sup>214</sup>

**Zleikha Shihābi** (1901-1992), born in Jerusalem. She attended the Sisters of Zion School in Jerusalem. She founded the first women organization in Jerusalem "Arab Women Executive Committee" in 1929. She is remembered for gathering three hundred women from different places from Palestine and demonstrated at the British High Commissioner to protest against the Jewish immigration to Palestine in 1929. Her work focused on charitable campaigns to support Palestinian fighters and injured and their families. She campaigned for girls' education. She led the first women demonstration in 1936 to the British High Commissioner to protest the detention and later deportation of some of the Palestinian revolution leaders. Zleikha Shihābi was a major contributor to the establishment of the Arab Women Union in Jerusalem in 1921. Her father became the mayor of Jerusalem in 1927.

In the photo that inspired this research, Zleikha Shihābi stands next to Huda Sha'rawi. Together Zleikha worked with the Egyptian Women Council and its Chief, Sha'rawi on campaigning against the Judaization plans for Palestine

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213. Fleischmann, E. *The Nation and its new Women*, p. 216.

214. Sabella, B. (2014) *Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem and Churches*.  
[http://alqudsgateway.ps/wp/wpcontent/uploads/2016/01/4\\_felstenyon-mase7yon.pdf](http://alqudsgateway.ps/wp/wpcontent/uploads/2016/01/4_felstenyon-mase7yon.pdf).

See also; Najjar, A., pp. 308-310, 246.

and exploit the British policies. The First Congress of Arab Women in Cairo that focused on issues related to Palestine in 1938.

Zleikha Shihābi continued to contribute to the women movement in Palestine efficiently. She helped establish many centers that included the women medical clinic that cared for pregnant women and children welfare. This extended for a day care and vocational training center for females. She remained the president of the AWU from 1937 until her death in 1992.<sup>215</sup>

In 1968 the Israelis deported her, but the United Nations interfered in her return.<sup>216</sup>

**Mary Sheḥadeh** (1901-1994), born in Lebanon. In 1931 she delivered a speech at the Orthodox Youth Club in Jaffa in 1931, where she described the situation of women in her time. She helped in the establishment of the Difa' (Defense) Party in 1934, which was chaired by Ragheb Nashashibi. Her husband owned the Mir'at al-Sharq paper to which she contributed in articles that addressed women issues and social issues.<sup>217</sup> She worked as a journalist at Mir'at al-Sharq (mirror of the East) newspaper that was owned by her husband

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215. Encyclopedia of Palestine. <http://www.palestinapedia.net/> زليخة/الشهابي-١٩٠١-١٩٩٢

216. Najjar, A., pp.200-210, 320-332. See: annex: Photo # 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9, 10, 11,12, 13, 14,16, 53.

217. [https://books.google.ps/books?Id=sohCF9Nly3sC&pg=PT107&lpg=PT107&dq=شهادة+ماري&source=bl&ots=Q4U7gMLm5y&sig=McbbhJ560-MprX584duH08ZIdIU&hl=en&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=شهادة٢٠٪ماري&f=false](https://books.google.ps/books?Id=sohCF9Nly3sC&pg=PT107&lpg=PT107&dq=شهادة+ماري&source=bl&ots=Q4U7gMLm5y&sig=McbbhJ560-MprX584duH08ZIdIU&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=شهادة٢٠٪ماري&f=false)

(Boūlos Sheḥadeh). She wrote about women issues and called for the liberation of women as the case of European women. She was active in the women movement. She participated in the women's conferences of 1938 and 1944 and headed some of the announced committees. She was a member of Arab Women Association and later continued to be active within the Angelic Women Association in Ramallah. In 1942 she became known for her radio show on Jerusalem "Education in the Arab family."<sup>218</sup>

**Asma Toubi**<sup>219</sup> (1905-1983), born in Nazareth. She studied in the English school in Nazareth. She was active during the British occupation, she was among the founders of Acre Women Union in 1929, and remained active there until 1948, when she left to Lebanon after the Nakba and continued to write articles, novels and poetry. Asma is considered one of the pioneers play writers in Palestinian theatre. She became the president of the Arab Women's Union in Acre, a leader of the Orthodox Young Women's Association, and a prominent member of the Young Christian Women's Association.<sup>220</sup> She appeared in Radio programs including Huna al Quds in Jerusalem, and al Sharq al adna in Jaffa.

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218. Najjar, A. pg 237, 241-242, 257,270,

219. See: annex: Photos # 79

220. From Arab Women Writers a Critical Reference Guide by Radwa Ashour & Feryal Ghazoul. <http://www.arabwomenwriters.com/index.php/2014-05-03-16-01-55/a/asma-tubi>

Her publication in Arabic includes Masra' qaysar Rusiya wa 'a'ilatih (The Death of the Czar and His Family, play) (1925). Al-Fatah wa kayf uriduha (The Young Woman and How I Want Her, essays) (1943). Sabr wa faraj (Patience and Relief, play) (1943). Ala madhbah al-tadhiya (On the Sacrificial Altar, Poetry, two vols.). 1946. Ahadith mina al-qalb (Stories from the Heart, short stories). (1955). 'Abir wa Majd (Fragrance and Glory, essays) (1966). Jibal al-murjan (The Coral Mountain) (1972). Hubbi al-kabir (My Big Love, poetry). (1972). Nafahat 'itr (Wafts of Perfume, essays). 1975. Nisa' wa asrar (Women and Secrets, play). Shahidat al-ikhlas (The Martyr of Faithfulness, play).

Wahida bi-wahida wa-l-qimar (One to One and the Wager, one-act play).<sup>221</sup>

She died in Lebanon. She received the Lebanese Constantine the Great Award in 1973 and was awarded the Jerusalem Medal for Culture and Arts in 1990.<sup>222</sup>

**Shahinda Duzdār** (1906), born in Jerusalem. Shahinda headed the Arab Women Association she was an active leader in the thirties. She was among the women delegation to the High Commissioner in late twenties. Duzdār and Mughannam have been “skipped” from movement memory as a result of the political friction that occurred between the

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221. From Arab Women Writers a Critical Reference Guide by Radwa Ashour & Feryal Ghazoul. <http://www.arabwomenwriters.com/index.php/2014-05-03-16-01-55/a/asma-tubi>.

222. Ibid. See also: [http://www.almoajam.org/poet\\_details.php?id=992](http://www.almoajam.org/poet_details.php?id=992). See also: Najjar, A., pp. 279-283.

two rival families. However, their involvement, in protests, demonstrations, and conferences were as evitable as the others.<sup>223</sup>

**Zahiya Nashashibi**, born in Jerusalem. She was among the activists in the women's movement in Palestine. She participated in the different Arab Conventions she was among the founders of the Arab Women's Union in Jerusalem in 1928. She participated in the demonstrations of the 1929 and the thirties revolt. Zahiya was the competitor of Zleikha Shihābi over the presidency of the Arab Women Association. The rivalry between the Husseini's and the Nashashibi was the leading cause of this fracture among women associations, which resulted in the formation of the Arab Women Union. After the breach, Shihābi became the president of the AWU. Zahiya succeeded Shahinda Duzdār in heading the AWA in 1946 and held the position until her death in 1977.<sup>224</sup>

**Wajīha Husseini** (1908), born in Jerusalem. She was the wife of 'Abdel Qader Husseini: Wajīha was destined to live the burdens implied to her husband; the fighter despite inheriting a significant amount of property from her father. Her role in helping the soldiers in supporting their needs was invaluable. She participated in smuggling, hiding and feeding as well as securing the soldiers' supplies in the different locations within her husband's lifetime.<sup>225</sup>

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223. Fleischman, E. *The Nation and its new Women*, pp. 28-290.

224. Najjar, A., pp.322-327. See also: Annex: Photos # 3, 5, 6,7,8 ,9,64.

225. Khalidi, H., *wa mada ahd al mujamalat*.

**Wahida al-Khalidi** was among the founders of the Arab Women's Union in 1928. She was among the women who attended the Arab Convention. Together with Matiel Mughannam, they were the principal signatories on the written communications in the early 1930s to the High Commissioner. Wahida was the wife of Hussein Fakhri Khalidi.<sup>226</sup>

**Maimana al Qassām** (1911-2004), born in Haifa. The daughter of 'Izz el dīn al Qassām who was martyred in 1935 by the British Army. As a young girl, Maimana recited the Qur'ān at the age of 6. She only finished elementary school and was supposed to go to dar al Mu'allimāt. But she couldn't because her father refused to teach there. A condition the administration put to accept her. She was active during the 1936 revolt. She gave a speech in the mosque of Haifa in that year in an attempt to motivate the people for the strike. In 1938 she received an invitation to participate in the First Arab women Congress in Cairo, and she was among the Palestinian delegation. She gave a speech that was widely spread in the papers. In 1948 she became a refugee with her family in Jordan, where she worked there as a teacher and remained until she died.<sup>227</sup>

**Hilweh Jakamān** (1913-2004), born in Bethlehem. She was an activist in the woman movement and established the Women Arab Union in Bethlehem. She was known during the 1947-1948 for her charity works and relief services.

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226. Najjar, A., pp. 324-325. See: Annex: Photo # 3.

227. Najjar, A. pp. 322-327, 149-183. See "Annex: Photo #3

She started cooperation where they were giving loans to the locals. During 48 and 1967, she was active in mobilizing the people for strikes.<sup>228</sup>

**Wadi'ah Qaddūra Khartabīl** (1915-), born in Beirut. She moved to Tiberias and then to Jerusalem with her husband at the age of seventeen. Her husband was a doctor. She started studying medicine before getting married. She received good education inside Christian Catholic schools, despite her family's Islamic religious background. She later moved to Tulkarem with her family, where the husband worked in the hospital there. She was appointed as the head of the Palestinian Women Arab Union branch in Tulkarem. During the revolt of 1936, her work within the union as well as, in her capacity as a wife to a doctor, whereas, the crisis led to many injuries and activists then became nurses. Though her work in the union she mobilized women in the north. She led demonstrations in the 1947 division plan. In 1949 the family left to Beirut where she started the Union's branch in Beirut.<sup>229</sup>

**Hind al-Husseini** (1916-1994), born in Jerusalem. She finished her elementary education from the Islamic school for girls in the old city of Jerusalem and graduated from the English school in 1937 and worked as a teacher. She gained her remarkable reputation after rescuing the orphans who survived the Deir Yasin Massacre in April 1948, where she converted her family mansion into an orphanage that continues to operate until this day. During the 1936

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228. Abdel Hadi, F. 1930s pg 183-197

229. Abdel Hadi, F. 1930s, pp. 197-245.

revolution, as a young woman, she was active in collecting donations to the fighters with other women activists.<sup>230</sup> She joined the Arab women's union in 1945. And she established a school and a girl's college Dar al Tifl al 'Arabi later.<sup>231</sup>

**Madīḥa Nusseibeh** (1917-2002) participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. Madiha studied in Sion's school and the English College in Jerusalem. In 1938 she received a scholarship to study at Cambridge University. She taught in the Ma'muniyyeh School, and later in Dar al Mu'allimāt. She left to Ramallah with her family after the Nakba and worked as a volunteer with Refugee Committee where she became a member and later became a prominent member of the Refugee Council. She opened many schools in Ramallah and Jerusalem for refugee children. In 1949 she worked with the red cross and the UNRWA and was in charge of social and education issues in Jerusalem and Ramallah, where she opened more than forty girls' schools. She was an active member in the AWU.<sup>232</sup> She appears in the Photo.<sup>233</sup>

**Fadwa Touqan** <sup>234</sup>(1917-2013), born in Nablus the sister of the renowned poet Ibrahim Touqan was born to a wealthy conservative family who denied female's access to education or movement. Her exchange letters with her brother Ibrahim, who encouraged her to read and write, discovered her skills

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230. See: Annex: Photos #14,15,59

231. Najjar, A., pp. 152,207,291,331.

232. <http://www.awu-jer.org/aboutus.shtml>.

233. [http://jerusalemrecalled.com/مدیحة\\_أديب\\_محمود\\_نسیبه/](http://jerusalemrecalled.com/مدیحة_أديب_محمود_نسیبه/). See: Ibid.

234. See: Annex: Photo # 81.

in poetry and writing. She moved to his residence of living in Jerusalem and stayed there until his death. During that period, she blames active, and her real and poetry contribution was appreciated. She wrote many novels and poems. An important figure in the Palestinian literature, not less than her brother.<sup>235</sup>

Her Publications include:

My Brother Ibrahim (1946)

Alone with The Days (1952)

I Found It' (1957)

Give Us Love (1960)

In Front of A Closed Door (1967).

The Night and the Horsemen (1969)

Alone On the Summit of The World (1973)

July and The Other Thing (1989)

The Last Melody (2000)

Longing Inspired by the Law of Gravity (2003)

Touqān, Fadwa: AnAutobiography: A Mountainous Journey<sup>236</sup>

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235. Najjar, A., pp. 274-275.

236. <http://arabwomenwriters.com/index.php/2014-05-03-16-01-55/f/fadwa-tuqan-sp-224069410>

**Isam Hamdi Hussein** (1919-2005), lived in Jaffa, Nazareth, and Gaza. She graduated from Dar al Mu'allimāt and worked as a teacher in Gaza's Elementary Girls School. She was an activist against the British occupation and participated in the 1936 revolt through using school cultural activities as a forum for resistance. She wrote columns in newspapers, and had a Radio show in Jerusalem Radio under the title of "from Girl to Girl." She became a school principal and was able to promote the education level into secondary by 1948. During, the Nakba she founded an organization called "Al Takaddom al Nisāi (Women's Progress) that worked on helping the refugees by providing services and collected donations. She established a theater in 1948 and performed in the act she directed. She was the first woman to remove the veil (the face cover) in Gaza. In the later years of struggle she was invited to a woman's conference in Cairo where she made a speech that was heard coincidentally by Jamal 'Abdel Nasser who asked her personally later to appreciate, her, words and as a result, the minister paid a visit to Gaza.<sup>237</sup>

**Fikriyeh Sidqī** (1919-1979), born in Jerusalem. A writer, who wrote in anonymous under the pseudo name of Qari'a (A reader). She went to Al-Quds School. She wrote in Filastin Paper. Later, she wrote under the name of "a searcher in the desert." Fikriyeh encouraged Palestinian women to work on their promotion step by step and empower themselves. She was the first woman to attend a lecture in the YMCA for the author Amin Rihana who resided in Haifa. Her presence

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237. 'Abdel Hadi, F. Palestinian Women's Role in the Thirties. From an interview conducted, pp. 277-299.

in that conference as the only woman, sitting next to men, made an example of fearlessness. Fikriyeh became the topic of newspapers and was described as the liberal Palestinian girl, the Higher Commissioner was present in that, event and he applauded her presence and addressed Muslim women through her in asking for their right to existence.<sup>238</sup>

**Serene Husseini** (1920-2008), born in Jerusalem. She contributed with a breathtaking biography on her memories in Jerusalem that allows vivid memories of a real Jerusalemite life that history cannot wash away. She lived a life of exodus and diaspora after having Jerusalem as her springhouse, Jericho the winter house and Sharafat the summerhouse. Her life became an exodus from Beirut to Baghdad, and Jerusalem became a visiting place. She studied as a child in the Pre-School of the American colony. Her school years were in the new Islamic Institute, which was closed in 1930 by the British forces. She studied later in the friend's school in Ramallah, and in Beirut, she graduated from the American University of Beirut and was married there. She became part of the Palestinian women union and worked closely with refugees in Lebanon after 1967.<sup>239</sup>

**Najwa Ka'war** <sup>240</sup>(1923-2015), born in Nazareth. A writer and poet. She studied in Nazareth and received her higher

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238. [http://jerusalemrecalled.com/فكرية\\_صدقي\\_الألاميبي](http://jerusalemrecalled.com/فكرية_صدقي_الألاميبي)

See also; Najjar, A., pp. 239-240.

239. Husseini, S.

See also; Najjar, A. pp. 285-288.

240. See Annex: Photo # 80

education in Dar al Mu'allimāt in Jerusalem. She was an activist and worked on promoting cultural life in Jerusalem and Palestine. She published novels and articles. Her stories were broadcasted in Jerusalem Radio and the Far East as well as Holland. She lived between Haifa, Jerusalem, and Ramallah and ended in Beirut.<sup>241</sup> She started the magazine al-Ra'id, in 1957 together with her husband (father) Rafiq Farah.

She published many books in Arabic that include: ukkan al-tabiq al- 'ulwi (The People Upstairs, novel). Amman: Jordanian Artistic Committee to Support the Intifada, 1996

'Abiru al-sabil (The Passersby, short stories). (1954).

Durub masabih (Lamp Paths, short stories). (1956).

Mudhakkirat rihla (Memoirs of Journey, autobiography). (1957).

Sirr Shahrazad (Sheherazade's Secret, play). (1958).

'Abir wa asda' (Scent and Echoes, illustrations). (1959).

Malik al-majd (The King of Glory, a play about Jesus Christ). (1961).

Li-man al-rabi'? (Who Owns Spring? short stories). Nazareth: al-Hakim Press, 1963.

Silsilat qisas li-I-ashbal (A Series of Stories for Young Ones, children's literature, 3 vols.). (1963-1965).

al-Liqa ' (The Meeting, short stories). (1972).

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241. <http://www.alnssabon.com/showthread.php? T=19648>.

Ummat al-rabb (Nation of the Lord, play). (1972).

‘Ahd min al-Quds (A Vow from Jerusalem). (1978).

Rihlat al-huzn wa-l- ‘ata ‘ l journey of Sadness and Giving). (1981).

Intifadat al- ‘asafir (The Sparrows’ Uprising, short stories). (1991).<sup>242</sup>

**Saba Fahoūm**<sup>243</sup> (1923-2004), born in Nazareth. She was an active participant in the Nakba victim’s support. She graduated from Dar al Mu’allimāt College in Jerusalem. She taught at the Islamic School in Nazareth in 1943, and she was active against the British occupation when she was a volunteer in relief services. In 1948 her family fled to Beirut. She continued her higher education including her Ph.D. from Baghdad University.

She published books and articles about the Palestinian cause and women political status. Among her books was a book about female prisoners in Israeli jails in 1975. She wrote a book about Libyan women that was translated into five languages. Saba participated in the First Palestinian Women Council in 1965 and was among the pioneers in re-establishing the Women Union in Jerusalem after 1964.<sup>244</sup>

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242. From Arab Women Writers a Critical Reference Guide by Radwa Ashour & Feryal Ghazoul [http://arabwomenwriters.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=161&Itemid=115](http://arabwomenwriters.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=161&Itemid=115)

243. See: Annex: Photo #72

244. <http://www.aljabha.org/?i=74967>

See also Najjar, A., pp.150-158.

***Samiha Khalil*** <sup>245</sup>(1923-1999), born in 'Anabta. She got married while she was still in school, and decided to pursue her education after having five children. She started as a young girl in the 1936 revolt. She became active with her mother who was a member of the Palestinian Women Arab Union in Tulkarem headed by Wadi'ah Khartabīl. The organization had a political agenda that focused on recruitment against selling land to the Jews and to those who collaborated with them. She helped distribute their statements in the stores and the streets. Samiḥa's roles after the Nakba and within the Palestinian National Union and inside Jam'īyyet In'āsh al Ūsra that she headed until her last year of life represents an important model of Palestinian resilience. Samiḥa however, insisted on considering that the Palestinian cause and the struggle are that's of a woman and a man alike and equally. Each within what he or she can provide. She always refused to join any political party but insisted on serving any that helps the Palestinian cause. She believed the completion among the parties didn't help it. <sup>246</sup>

***Widād Abu al-Hajj al Ayyūbī*** <sup>247</sup>(1924-2006), born in Jerusalem. An educator, a writer, and an activist. Her activism started when she was a young girl within schools' activists within the student guide program. While still a student she participated in demonstrations in the 1936 revolt and later during the Nakba. She studied at al Ma'muniyyeh School,

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245. See: Annex: Photo# 82.

246. 'Abdel Hadi, F. Palestinian Women's Role in the Thirties, pp.381-410.

247. See: Annex: Photo# 83

and Zion High. In 1948, she was a principal at the Malḥa School where she witnessed the escape of the village upon the massacre of Deir Yasīn the day before. She was a member of Arab Women Association. She attended the conference of the Women Arab Union in Jerusalem. As a writer, she wrote under a pseudonym name of Bint al ḥaram (the daughter of the mosque) in the fifties. She was the first media and journalism graduate, where she graduated from Egypt in 1953. She later wrote for the theater.<sup>248</sup>

**Nimra Tannous**, (1924) lived in Jerusalem and worked as a telephone operator at the Department of Telephone and Posts on Jaffa Road.<sup>249</sup> During the 1948 war, she was twenty-four. She played a significant role in warning the Arab leaders that the enemies may monitor them. A historic moment in her life was when she tried to reach the Jordanian royal court to want them about the dangers. She was surprised to be received directly by the king himself (‘Abdullah I) she told him: “Jerusalem is in jeopardy, your majesty.” A response the king did by calling for his prime minister and organizing a trip immediately to Jerusalem.<sup>250</sup>

**Fatimah Abu Suoud** was a teacher in Silwan’s Prep School. She succeeded in recruiting girls during the demonstrations by distributing statements for strikes and instructions. She

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248. [http://www.jerusalemrecalled.com/وداد\\_الأيوبي/](http://www.jerusalemrecalled.com/وداد_الأيوبي/)

See also, Abdel Hadi, F., Palestinian Women’s Role in the Thirties, pp.259-285.

249. [http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/2\\_Young\\_Women\\_1.pdf](http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/2_Young_Women_1.pdf). p. 35.

250. Najjar, A. pp.40-42.

had a strong effect on students and had strong national sentiments. She was active in Gaza and Jerusalem within the Arab Women Association that later merged into the Palestinian Women Union. She used to drive between Gaza and Jerusalem and was known for her political involvement. She was with the women delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi and appears in the photo.<sup>251</sup>

**Muhība Khorsheid** (1925-1999), born in Jaffa from Turkish origins. She was an artist, writer, and violinist. She started Zahret Al Aqḥawān organization with the vision of social change and interfaith tolerance. The group later became militarized, and she was affiliated with 'Abel Qader Husseini in their resistance. She wrote articles that reflected strong feminist views. She was a believer in the importance of women's role and the importance of equality with men. She called women to unveil themselves in her articles, as a step to the involvement of women in the political and social role that should include both Muslims and Christians. She became militant after witnessing a brutal murder of a child in Beit Yam by the Zionist terror gangs. Her sense of tolerance was affiliated with intense human emotions that included all religions not just among Muslims and Christians.<sup>252</sup>

**Narimān Khorsheid** (1927-2014), born in Jaffa. Narimān worked in a chemical company in Tel Aviv as a secretary. She is the sister of Muhiba. She joined her sister in the

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251. [https://jerusalems.wordpress.com/2015/07/23/british-mandate-jerusalemities/Facebook Page](https://jerusalems.wordpress.com/2015/07/23/british-mandate-jerusalemities/Facebook%20Page). Tags from family.

252. Abdel Hadi, F. *Palestinian Woman Roles in the Forties*, pp. 239-259. See: Annex: Photos 18,19,20,21.

organization within the aggressive form. She also was traumatized by witnessing the Manchiya massacre in Jaffa. One day upon going back from work she says a building destroyed by the British army. She made a public speech that provoked the emotions to the people, which resulted in canceling her contract of employment in the company. She joined the organization and was known for fighting. She led the military faction of Zahret Al Aqḥawān, which included men. She was a proud-armed woman who wore trousers. A definite sign of strength in fighting for her in that time. She visited the king ‘Abdulla of Jordan upon the request of the higher national committee. She also met the mufti in Syria. She became a threat to the Zionists. She left to Beirut in 1948, and later to Egypt. She attempted to learn how to fly in a bid to pursue the fight; she was joined with around twenty females. She later married and quit political and military work. She continued to live in Cairo.<sup>253</sup>

**Samīra Azzam**<sup>254</sup> (1927-1967), born in Acre. She worked as a teacher and expertized the English language. She wrote as a columnist in Palestine paper under the anonymous name of fatât al-Sahel (girl of the beach). She fled to Lebanon with her family in the Nakba. She worked as a newscaster in Far East radio. She wrote a series of stories and had some translations

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253. Abdo, J. *Nariman Khoursheid and the organization of Zahret al Aqḥawan*. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21776/--ناريمان-خورشيد-وتنظيم-زهرة-الاقحوان>

See also: Abdel Hadi, F. *Nuqta w awwal al Satr*. Iman Khorsheid: *Al dukhul ila hayyez al dhakira al jamaiyah*. <http://www.noqta.info/page-69517-ar.html>. See: Annex: Photos 18,19,20,21.

254. See Annex: Photo # 67a and 67b

and received many prizes in best novels writings in Beirut.<sup>255</sup>

Her publication in Arabic included: *Ashya' saghira* (Small Things, short stories).

(1954). *al-Zill al-kabir* (The Big Shadow, short stories)  
(1956). *Qisas ukhra* (Other Stories, short stories) (1960).  
*al-Sa`a wa-I-insan* (The Clock and the Man, short stories).  
(1963). *al-'Id la ya'ti mina al-nafidha al-gharbiya* (The Holiday Doesn't Come from the Western window, short stories). (1971)*Asda'* (Echoes, short stories). (1997).<sup>256</sup>

**'Isam 'Abdel Hadi** (1928 -2013), born as Fatima Isam in Nablus. Isam dropped her female name (Fatima) and called herself Isam only, to be able to represent her cause in what she perceived as courageous and resilient. She was elected as secretary general of the Arab women union in Nablus and was elected as president of general Palestinian women union in 1965 in its first establishing conference in Jerusalem. She was the first female to be deported under the Israeli occupying forces in 1969. She was a member of the national council that took place in Jerusalem in 1964 and was elected in 1974 to be the only woman in the central council for four years to continue her role in the higher committee. Isam was the sister –in- law of Tarab 'Abdel Hadi.<sup>257</sup>

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255. Najjar, A., pp.172,246,283-284.

256. From Jerusalemites.org website <http://www.arabwomenwriters.com/index.php/2014-05-03-16-01-55/s/samira-azzam>

257. 'Abdel Hadi, F. *Palestinian Woman Roles in the forties*, pp. 341-381. See: Annex: Photo# 71.

**Samīra Abu Ghazaleh**<sup>258</sup>(1928), born in Nablus. She studied in Jerusalem. She was among the first females to be selected to study at the American University in Beirut. She writes poetry and has columns and novels. She was the first woman in the Palestinian National Council.<sup>259</sup>

**Salwa Abu Khadra**<sup>260</sup> (1929- ), born in Jaffa. She received her Certificate of Education from Oxford in 1947. She became active in the sixties within the PLO and the women movement. She was an establishing member of the general Palestinian women council in 1965. Remained an active participant of Fateh and a member of its revolutionary council.<sup>261</sup>

Other women appeared in the Photo, but there was very limited information about them. These women are:

Samītha Nusseibeh, Madeleine Rahel Albina, Marie Awi, Catherine Berouti Gelat, Georgine ‘Attalla Calis, Fadila Duzdār, Hilda ‘Azzam, Katie Aboussouan Salāmah, Lucy Gress, Pauline Mantoura, Kokun Tuleil, Nuzha Darwish, Qudsiyyeh Seif Eddin and Badrieh Hussein. They all participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha’rawi in Jerusalem.<sup>262</sup>

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258. See: Annex: Photo# 84

259. Ibid., pp.293-341.

260. See: Annex: Photo#85

261. Ibid., pp.381-395.

262. Ibid.

## 9. Conclusion

The discussion in this research attempted to shed light on the development of the Palestinian women's movement from a context that could have been broadly overviewed through a photo that reflected a moving image of modernity within the society, that might have affected the rise and development of the women's movement then. As much as one can use a photo to understand some parts of the reality and analyze it; the very same picture can put us face to face with contradictions. If we think of the moment after that photo was taken, we can just put some of those women in a picture that is also used later, to discuss women movement in Palestine. In this other photo, the women are veiled. In this sense, it is not efficient to consider modernity when this modernity is jeopardized by behaviors that could be considered very controversial and contradictory. The discussion of modernity in the Arab world will remain restricted to traditional constraints that women voluntarily continued to adapt to. This, however, cannot undermine that such setting of modernity has affected those women, regardless to their adaptation to the requirement of the traditions. The journey of women in liberation remains as diverse then as it is today. It is always unique to the specific circumstances of the women in the particular place. In the same setting of time, as we have seen in the research, women in rural areas where veils remained, were not lesser efficient to the national movement that the women movement has delved in.

In what seems to be characteristic of Palestinian women attitude

towards adaptation and compromise, the women movement itself was compromised with masculine nationalism under the endorsement of the patriarchal structure that women never attempted to change revolutionary. It continues to be a part of adaptation to a compromise of gained or acquired rights.

It is true, however, that women raised issues that were “transgressions against the traditions of seclusion and segregation,”<sup>263</sup> but they rarely observed such matters. Fleischman notes that:

The same ladies who had kicked the gates of government offices and stood on a balcony “inflaming” [sic] the (male) crowd during the 1933 Jaffa disturbances would demurely declare, at meetings with the high commissioner, that “the traditions of Arab women, especially the Moslems among them ... would normally prevent them from calling on Your Excellency or any officer of Government. “This particular line was used repeatedly to excoriate the government and turn accusations around; thus women could blame the government for “forcing” them to engage in protest activities that sometimes turned violent.<sup>264</sup>

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263. Fleischmann, E., <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

264. Ibid.

The relationship of women and nationalism, cannot be excluded from the Palestinian women's movement, on the contrary, it remained a central concern and marked the significance of the links between modernity and reforms. The complexity of traditions and modernity in the Arab women mentality remained unchallenged. The women never challenged the traditions that limited their freedoms, especially when it came to segregation between females and males. When it came to British violations in this sense, the women would call such acts as barbarous and unjust. In doing this "they turned gender limitations upside down, converting them into a tactical weapon."<sup>265</sup>

I could not but agree with Abu Lughod argument that explains the difficulty in thinking about "the woman question", without escaping "the language of accusations and counter accusations about cultural authenticity"<sup>266</sup>I agree as well with Leila Ahmad's critique on Western Feminism where she argues that "the European obsession with unveiling women, reflected in the efforts of Lord Cromer, has produced the contemporary fixation on the veil as the quintessential sign of Muslim resistance and cultural authenticity."<sup>267</sup> The rhetoric that continues to provoke the Arab framing to the meaning of modernity that is congested with colonial forced ideals, and continue to give space to the Islamist discourse, which seizes the conversation at the level of the "Veil."

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265. Ibid.

266. Abu Lughod, L., p.14.

267. Ibid.

That is said, to talk about the Palestinian society and its structure in the past remains in the same complication that exists today. To be able to point out a category to a subject designated is also not easy.

What is certain in the journey of the Palestinian exodus is that men and women genuinely carried on their shoulders the liberation dreams of Palestine. As their exodus continued from the Nakba to the Naksa, the plight became a fight for finding a place to resist from, from Jordan to Syria, to Lebanon, until Tunisia. With each devastating closure to status in one city, the plight was taking another form. More power to the structure of the Fateh part of the PLO and Palestine was minimized gradually in the map and the hearts until, in the mid-1980s, the cause became not just institutionalized but personalized. It was a moment the purpose transformed into a state of personalization, and it all became about one person.

Whether that person was one or a body that formed what shaped the current situation of Palestinians today is not the most crucial part. The problem may lie in the fact that people's devotion to the cause was diverted. In the 1960s and '70s, those leaders (females when they existed) dedicated their lives to the freedom of Palestine. The resistance took the form of armed struggle. Women sacrificed their families in a society that is patriarchal and traditional in all its basic concepts, especially when it comes to women. Those women and men gave themselves to the plight of Palestine. How their discourse changed, and how their plight itself took a different course, explains a lot about our failures as a nation.

It could be true, that after being washed out of countries, every few years to another. Having to fight one's allies instead of one's enemies. Alternatively, conspire against those who hosted them and vice versa instead of teaming up to liberate the land were an exhausting work after three decades of struggle and resistance. By that time there was a lot of money and power, but no land to settle. Maybe bitterness and an aspiration anyone who did not taste displacement feel.

However, yet, we are talking about more than a half displaced population here. The decision to leave Beirut with hundreds of thousands of refugees behind what persisted in remaining a dark destiny of injustices and despair seems to be that of an unusual choice, not different from that of signing a peace agreement for the sake of just coming back home.

If one would wonder about the altering or the non-altering situation in the Palestinian women's movement, and thus its consequences, I would not agree more than Mayer's point of view in this regard in her previously mentioned book in this research:

Because their (women) national involvement started on grounds from which they were not challenging indigenous social structures— with literacy campaigns and aid to the needy, in the case of urban middle-class women and, in the event of peasant women, with demonstrations against the 'outsiders'— Palestinian women were able to take the streets and move from the private to the public

spheres in ways which were acceptable to their male counterparts.<sup>268</sup>

The absence of strategy in the Palestinian leadership of that period, which continues to this very day, remains a substantial obstacle to women's participation in the political sphere, and to identifying her role in the structure of the society. The movement succumbed to a politics of national consensus at the expense of developing an active feminist social agenda. The Palestinians have focused throughout their history on fighting an aggressor or enemy, but they never seem to have a plan for what is coming next. In today's living reality, the liberation project that has been announced as the main Palestinian goal became an obstacle that prevents women from gaining status or performing adequately within their real spectrum.

Interestingly, the Arab Women Association (AWA) played a more diplomatic role after the split of 1938 from the Arab Women Executive Committee (AWU). Whereas, the activities of the movement became more of meetings with government officials and visiting dignitaries and had a network of contacts with international organizations, which included other women's organizations.<sup>269</sup>

It is apparently no coincidence that the rise of the women's movement on the political level in the early British Mandate era and toward the last years of the Ottoman Empire

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268. Mayer, T., p.65.

269. Fleischmann, E. <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

coincided with the general need for such participation, as in the first intifada model. The involvement of women started voluntarily, and spontaneously. It was due to the general emotion of a nationalistic struggle that women found themselves on its front line, facing the aggression and oppression of the perpetrators when men were martyred or jailed or exiled. Women found themselves with no other choice but to confront the enemy. Participating in the ongoing emerging struggle has also managed to distribute roles of participation in the times of need in the Palestinian efforts.

Finally, the biographical trajectories discussed in this essay raise the significant issue of phases in the women's movement in Palestine. A significant number of those women were born at the turn of the nineteenth century, and their participation reached its high point during the 1930s—which corresponded with the zenith of the nationalist movement during the Mandate. The reemergence of that movement after the Nakba, especially after the 1967 war and the separation of Palestinian society from its diaspora, projected a women's movement whose objectives and temperament were at variance with its predecessors. While in the 1930s nationalism absorbed all the energies of these women leaders, in the 1970s and 1980s women were able to break with the nationalist consensus and create a social agenda that became prominent during the struggle against occupation. In a very paradoxical manner, the women's movement of the 1980s and 1990s returned to its roots in the 1920s.

That period undoubtedly witnesses a movement of women

who were very much part of and concerned about their societies and cannot be dismissed as Western agents.<sup>270</sup> Many of those women had strong and some ties to Europeans, in not only the languages in which they wrote, but their formative influences, their interlocutors, and their liberal ideas, but nevertheless, the women's movement in Palestine kept a certain culture and never went out of the line of its nationalist target.<sup>271</sup>

The controversy between the public and private appearances and that of strong nationalist agenda and submission to patriarchal dominated national plan remain to be the unanswered complexity of Palestinian women. One can also link this to what might have been a tactic from the women's side in gaining more power in front of the men. Stabilizing what tradition is within a set of norms that society agrees on, opposite gaining more rights in activism. Another maneuver woman keeps doing until this day. As such could be the example of a woman who agrees to wear a veil so that her husband allows her to work outside the home.

Hence, Palestinian women movement cannot be excluded from being considered as "the first articulation of Palestinian feminism."<sup>272</sup> Even though Palestinian women did not define themselves solely by gender, and they did not perceive what can be considered a sharp break between nationalism and feminism, the fact that women managed to create

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270. Abu Lughod, l., p.16.

271. Ibid.

272. Fleischmann, E. <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

their movement and sustain such movement, and yet keep their private lives and also. Retire to it later is by itself is a feminist act, once we look at it from its historical context. However, it is not possible not to see Palestinian women movement without the complex intersection of nationalism, feminism, and colonialism. The colonized political context that still defines the Palestinian life until today. The fact that the women also called themselves women's organizations can also tell about their conscious affiliation with a political position.<sup>273</sup> Fleischmann explains:

The gender consciousness of the movement's founders was muted, often inconsistent, and subtly subversive rather than explicitly "feminist" in the contemporary sense of the term, its gender critique often hidden within a manipulation of traditional gender norms. But it is important to stress that despite the charitable and socially oriented character of much of their work, the women explicitly conceived their movement in political terms, even while not considering themselves an auxiliary of the nationalist movement. By referring consistently to themselves as the women's movement, they self-consciously staked out a political position.<sup>274</sup>

Thus, the women in the mandate period succeeded in

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273. Fleischmann, E. <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

274. Ibid.

forming a movement, not just organizations that served as a ground base for the national movement in Palestine, together with the Women movement. The national movement in the Palestinian case cannot be separated from the natural development of modernity in Palestine and the surrounding evolving world. Interestingly, women's movement managed to engage productively with the needs of the society as a whole. We could see the involvement of women organization in training, education, empowerment and so on. We could also see a prominent role in politics after their 1929 Congress and bold move to go to the High Commissioner. That event only proves that women were strategic and very well organized, and the follow-up and consequence of that event continued to give women access to the political arena.

In many ways, I would agree with voices as Fleischmann who believed that "it is precisely the legacy of the historical women's movement that set a precedent for and enabled contemporary Palestinian women's activists to mark a place for themselves in nationalist and feminist politics."<sup>275</sup>

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275. Fleischmann, E. <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/40801>

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## **Annexes**

### **III. Photos**

|||| . . Nadia Harhash . . ||||

## **Documents**

**(Endnotes)**

|||| . . Nadia Harhash . . ||||