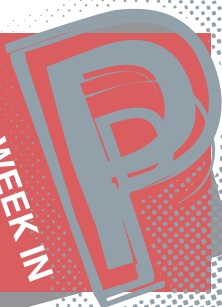


THIS WEEK IN



Issue **239**
March 2018

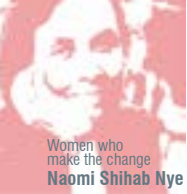
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Palestinian Women: The Ongoing Struggle

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Women who
make the change
Naomi Shihab Nye

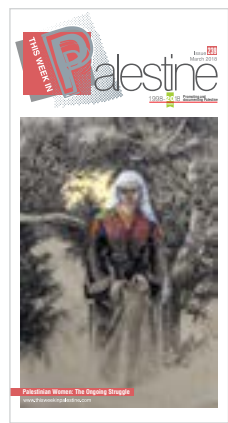


In this issue

Palestinian Women: The Ongoing Struggle

Issue **239**
March 2018

- 4 Time Is Now**
- 10 Achieving Gender Equality**
- 14 Building Gender Accountability in Palestine**
- 18 Abolishing Early Marriage**
- 24 Palestinian Women's Political Participation and Access to Decision-Making**
- 30 Economic Independence**
- 34 Women's Sports**
- 40 A New World Order**
- 46 GOALLLLLL!!!**
- 54 Women's Participation in the Reconciliation Process**
- 60 "Ahu Rajil, wa As-Salam"**
- 64 Gender Equality Paves the Road Towards Sustainable Development**
- 68 Because I Am a Man**
- 72 Personality of the Year**
- 74 Personality of the Month**
- 76 Book of the Month**
- 77 Book of the Month**
- 78 Artist of the Month**
- 80 Exhibition of the Month**
- 82 Film of the Month**
- 84 Where to Go**
- 86 TWiP Kitchen**
- 88 Events**
- 92 Accommodation**
- 94 Restaurants**
- 95 Attractions**
- 96 Maps**
- 98 The Last Word**



End of the Day, art work
by Sliman Mansour.



This special issue of This Week in Palestine themed "Palestinian Women: The Ongoing Struggle" is sponsored jointly by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**, through **NET-MED Youth Project** Funded by the **European Union**, the **Representative Office of Norway to the Palestinian Authority**, and **UN WOMEN**. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the sponsors.



This Week in Palestine would like to thank the **United Nations Development Programme / Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People** for their support throughout the year 2018.

Empowered lives.
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Women who
make the change
Mona Hatoum



This year, International Women's Day, celebrated on May 8, carries the slogan "Time is now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives." We happily celebrate the achievements of women achievers in academic, economic, and social fields, but we must also honor the contributions of the laborers who help feed our children and nations, the agricultural entrepreneurs, and the women who sell the fruits of their gardens on the sidewalks of our streets - they all contribute to our society and economy. We celebrate the shining stars, let us also honor and cherish the small candles that spread their light in villages and rural settings. We must recognize, acknowledge, and live up to the realization that investing into all segments of society benefits everyone.

This Week in Palestine would like to thank UNESCO, the Representative Office of Norway, and UN Women for their support of this issue and for the rich and valuable content they contributed and facilitated. Further and no lesser thanks go to UNDP for their contributions and for the continuous support it has pledged for the year 2018, helping secure our sustainability.

This issue contains articles by Lodovico Folin-Calabi, UNESCO Representative in Palestine; Norwegian Ambassador Hilde Haraldstad; UN Women Special Representative Ulziisuren Jamsran; HE Dr. Haifa Al-Agha, minister of women's affairs; Siham Rashid, executive director of the Gender Policy Research Institute (GPI)/

UNESCO; Majd Beltaji, gender equality program specialist at UNESCO; Aisha Saifi, program director at the Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association, PFPPA; MIFTAH, a Palestinian civil society organization for the promotion of democracy and good governance; Amani Aruri, advocacy team leader at the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling, WCLAC; Malak Hasan, secretary general of the Palestinian boxing federation; gender expert Emmicki Roos; Nader Atta, deputy team leader at UNDP/PAPP, Willemijn van Lelyveld, program management specialist at UNDP/PAPP; Wafaa Al Kafarna, project management analyst at UNDP/PAPP; Geoffrey D. Prewitt, UNDP's deputy special representative in the OPT; Inas Margieh, UN Women program coordinator; and Eunjin Jeong, advocacy and communications officer at UN Women Palestine Office;

Personality of the month is Muna Taneeb. Our deep condolences go to Majed Bamya; he paid a great tribute to his mother Samia Bamieh, our personality of the year, who passed away as this issue was going to print. Our artist of the month is Manal Mahamid. Enjoy taking a look the exhibition and two book reviews, and visit some of the many events that are listed this month.

The entire team at TWiP wishes a Happy Mother's Day to all those who are celebrating this day on March 21, as is the custom in Palestine, and a healthy entry into spring season to all our readers.



Sincerely, **Tina Basem**

Forthcoming Issues

April 2018: **Preservation versus Appropriation**

May 2018: **Al-Nakba, Seventy Years On**

June 2018: **Design in Palestine**

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Time Is Now

Rural and Urban Activists Transforming Women's Lives



Lodovico Folin-Calabi
Hilde Haraldstad
Ulziisuren Jamsran

International Women's Day celebrates on March 8 the global movement for women's rights, and offers the opportunity to put calls for equality and justice into action, empower women in all settings, and celebrate the activists who are working relentlessly to help women claim their rights and realize their full potential. This year, echoing the priority theme of the upcoming 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), International Women's Day will draw attention to the rights and activism of rural women under the theme "Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives."

Rural women make up over a quarter of the world's population and constitute the majority of the 43 percent of women in the global agricultural labor force. For far too long, however, the rights, livelihoods, and wellbeing of rural women and girls have been

Photo courtesy of UNESCO.



Courtesy of UNESCO, the Norwegian Representative Office to the Palestinian Authority, and UN Women

overlooked or incompletely addressed in policies, budgets, investments, and interventions at all levels and across all countries. As a result, less than 20 percent of landholders worldwide are women. And while the global pay gap between men and women stands at 23 percent, in rural areas it can reach 40 percent.

UN Women has been working with excluded and marginalized women in rural areas in Palestine, supporting their efforts to improve their living standards and achieve social, economic, and political participation. The new Strategic Note of UN Women in Palestine (2018-2022) aims to further this investment through three main impact areas. The goal is that

1. women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy;
2. women and girls live a life free of violence; and
3. women lead, participate in, and benefit from peace and security and from humanitarian action and recovery efforts.

To advance the rights of rural women through economic empowerment, we continue to work with women and promote their access to decent work in collaboration with the International Labor Organization and with the support of the Italian Agency for International Cooperation. We engage in efforts to create an enabling environment that promotes women's labor market participation on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, and through the direct capacity development of women. Thereby and in line with its normative mandate, UN Women is supporting Palestine in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination

of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). A wide range of support measures at the policy- and institutional levels are being provided, with UN Women working in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Such support measures include also the enhancement of the CEDAW reporting and implementation capacities of women's and human rights organizations.

Furthermore, UN Women contributes to the strengthening of women's access to justice and the fulfilment of their rights. It engages in the capacity building

Rural women and their organizations represent an enormous potential, and they are on the move to claim their rights and improve their livelihoods and wellbeing. Using various methods, they are setting up successful businesses, acquiring new skills, pursuing their legal entitlements, and running for office.

of Palestinian security and justice institutions, supports the improvement of the legislative environment, and works directly with women survivors of violence. These initiatives are undertaken within the framework of various programs that include Sawasya, the UNDP/UN Women/UINICEF Joint Programme "Promoting



Photo courtesy of UN Women.

the Rule of Law in Palestine.”ⁱ In order to empower female survivors of violence and to help them recover from trauma, we are contributing towards efforts to increase the availability, accessibility, and quality of essential services. An increasing focus must target and improve coordination among the partners who are working on eliminating violence against women (EVAW), as synchronized efforts will achieve better and more sustainable results.

In order to advance women’s rights at home and in the workplaces, UN Women is inviting both men and women to engage as equal partners in achieving gender equality and securing the empowerment of women. To this end, it is important to produce evidence-based research that may guide policy changes, to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations and youth groups, and to develop community-based activities that are founded on innovative approaches and south-south exchanges. We are making strides to encourage women’s participation in securing peace and security as well as in humanitarian and recovery efforts in Palestine. UN Women is leading among the actors who engage in mainstreaming gender in humanitarian programming, and it provides support to civil society organizations in their promotion of the implementation of Palestine’s UN

Security Council Resolution 1325 National Action Plan.”ⁱⁱ

In celebration of International Women’s Day 2018, UN Women reiterates its commitment to gender equality and to the empowerment of rural women and girls, so they may fully enjoy all their human rights. We call on our partners to intensify their actions, based on earlier commitments, by increasing their investment into the wellbeing and human rights of rural women and girls in Palestine. Using this opportunity, UN Women furthermore would like not only to thank its national and international partners who have up-scaled their commitments towards achieving much higher results in order to give due recognition to the change that has been initiated and is being led by women in Palestine.

UNESCO considers gender equality one of its main pillars and a global priority, as reflected in the UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2014–2021.ⁱⁱⁱ In Palestine – through the Joint MDG-F Program on Culture and Development (2009–2012)^{iv} – UNESCO has worked over the last few years in partnership with the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNDP, and UN Women, as well as the Palestinian ministries of culture, agriculture, women’s affairs, tourism and antiquities, and planning and administrative development in order to safeguard and promote

Palestinian cultural diversity as a means of fostering social cohesion and inclusive economic growth. Among the program’s achievements were first, the development of a knowledge-based tool for understanding, managing, and disseminating data on Palestinian intangible cultural heritage (ICH), which included a gender lens review and an archive for ICH that covers the three domains of traditional agricultural knowledge, fisher(men/women) culture, and food culture. Secondly, the establishment of a comprehensive program for the production and marketing of local agro-biodiversity products; hereby approximately 150 women entrepreneurs from seven women’s associations benefitted from capacity building in the production and marketing of high quality food products, using and perpetuating traditional crop varieties and processing methods.

Palestine’s National Policy Agenda (NPA) 2017–2022: Putting Citizen’s First, outlines the Palestinian Authority’s plan that aims to ensure the safety and security of the Palestinian people by institutionalizing democratic principles, fairly enforcing the rule of law, preserving Palestinian shared identity and cultural heritage, and strengthening resilience of the Palestinian people.^{vi} Pillar 3 of the NPA is Sustainable Development, which, among others, includes three national priority areas relevant to rural women’s development and activism. These areas are: National Priority 6, which aims to ensure economic independence and entails national policies towards building Palestine’s future economy and creating job opportunities; National Priority 7, which aims to promote social justice and the rule of law, as well as gender equality and women’s empowerment; and National Priority 10, which aims to create resilient communities, revitalize agriculture, and strengthen rural communities.

Through its Priority Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), and as part of its activities that aim at advancing

While land ownership, access, and use are not disaggregated by sex, women are the nucleus of agricultural production in Palestinian society. However, the cost of women’s agricultural work in maintaining the land – frequently carried out in addition to unpaid care taking of children and the elderly – on the one hand, and lack of ownership on the other require intervention. PCBS data for 2009/2010 indicate that 73.3 percent of all agricultural employees are unpaid family members, 2.4 percent are permanent paid employees, and 24.3 percent are temporary paid employees.^v

gender equality in Palestine – as included in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Palestine 2018–2022 (UNDAF)^{vii} – UNESCO supports national policies for sustainable development that are gender-transformative and empower women and men from all walks of life, so all may contribute to and enjoy the benefits of sustainable development and peace. Therefore, UNESCO’s approach includes mainstreaming gender in all planned actions, including legislation, policies, and programs. From design to implementation and within its wide contribution, our agency works towards the fulfillment of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (“To achieve gender equality and

Bridging the gender gap in rural life, in particular increasing women's access to and ownership of land, will not only empower women and their agency but also contribute to national economic growth, healthier families, and more resilient communities.



Photo courtesy of UN Women.

empower women and girls”) within UNESCO’s broad contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is in this framework that UNESCO, thanks to generous funding by the Government of Norway, has throughout the years supported the establishment of a Gender Policy Institute (GPI), designed as a gender policy think-tank with the aim to assist the Palestinian Ministry of Women’s Affairs, together with other key line ministries and relevant national entities, in the formulation and review of gender-related policies.

Women’s rights and gender equality are not only a priority domestically, but also part of Norway’s global efforts. We are pleased to work closely both on a global level and here in Palestine with UN Women, UNESCO, and other local and international partners to promote women’s rights, participation,

empowerment, and protection. We value our close cooperation with the Palestinian Government and with the active civil society here in Palestine, engaging in support of the efforts that follow up on international treaties and commitments in order to empower women, strengthen their inclusion and role in society, and fight gender-based violence. Enabling high quality education multiplies girls and women’s economic choices and increases their voice and influence in society. The Education 2030 agenda recognizes that gender equality requires an approach that “ensures that girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete education cycles, but are empowered equally in and through education.”^{viii} Large gender gaps exist in access, learning achievement, and continuation in education in many countries, most often at the expense of girls. According to UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics, despite progress, more girls than boys still remain out of school – as 16 million girls worldwide will never set foot in a classroom, and women account for two thirds of the 750 million adults without basic literacy skills.

But achieving gender equality is not just about girls. We must educate boys and young men to respect girls and women and to recognize that gender equality and inclusion of women benefits all. Inclusion of women is also important for sustainable economic growth and development. It is estimated that raising women’s labor force participation rates worldwide to male levels could add US\$ 12 trillion, or 26 percent, to the global GDP by 2025.^{ix}

Experience also shows that the inclusion of women and gender equality in politics and in peace and security work gives better results. Women have the right to take part in decision-making processes that affect their own future. Moreover, we know that when women participate, we can achieve a broader-based and more sustainable peace. Norway welcomes

the government’s National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325: Women, Peace and Security (2017-2019)^x and the efforts extended by civil society, and looks forward to support these efforts in the time to come.

The topic of this year’s women’s day, “Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women’s lives,” recognizes the global importance also of rural women. It should encourage us, international and Palestinian partners, to work together and further enhance women’s rights and empowerment – for the benefit of all.

Lodovico Folin Calabi has been the UNESCO Representative in Palestine since 2015. Previous posts include UNESCO Representative in Libya, Head of the UNESCO Project Office in Libya and Head of the UNESCO Project Office in Tripoli, as well as positions at the UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre and at the Executive Office of the Assistant Director-General, where he coordinated the World-Heritage-related training and research centers established under UNESCO’s auspices in Bahrain, Brazil, China, Italy, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, and Spain. Trained in international corporate law, Mr. Folin Calabi holds a PhD in urban history.

Ambassador Hilde Haraldstad has been the head of the Norwegian Representative Office to the PA since 2016. Previous posts at the Norwegian Foreign Ministry include Ambassador of Norway to Sri Lanka, assistant director general for conflict resolution, director of humanitarian policy, and positions in which she worked with the Middle East and the United Nations. A historian (Cand Philol.) by education, Ms. Haraldstad has also studied political science and French literature.

Ms. Ulziisuren Jamsran is the UN Women Special Representative in Palestine, and also the Country Representative for the UN Women Moldova Office. Ms. Jamsran’s development experience includes 22 years of practical development work and in international strategic and managerial leadership in gender and women’s issues in numerous countries for UNDP, UNIFEM and UN Women, where she has provided technical expertise on gender issues, knowledge management, and microfinance. A native of Mongolia and an economist by education, Ms. Jamsran speaks Mongolian, English and Russian.

ⁱ A brief description is available at http://www.ps.undp.org/content/papp/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/strengthening-the-rule-of-law-in-the-opt.html.

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Women’s Affairs, The National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325: Women, Peace and Security – Palestine 2017-2019, Palestinian National Authority, available at http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/170515Pln_MoWA_e.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ This document is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002272/227222e.pdf>.

^{iv} For more information visit Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO Ramallah Office, available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/culture/intangible-cultural-heritage/>.

^v Press Release: PCBS in cooperation with Ministry of Agriculture, 2010/2011.

^{vi} National Policy Agenda 2017–2022: Putting Citizens First. December 2016, available at https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/npa_english_final_approved_20_2_2017_printed.pdf.

^{vii} Document available at http://www.ps.undp.org/content/dam/papp/docs/Publications/UNDP-papp-research-undaf_2018-2022.pdf.

^{viii} *Global Education Monitoring Report*, UNESCO, 2016, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002457/245752e.pdf>.

^{ix} Jonathan Woetzel, et al., How advancing women’s equality can add \$ 12 trillion to global growth, McKinsey Global Institute, September 2015, available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>.

^x This document is available at http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/170515Pln_MoWA_e.pdf.



Achieving Gender Equality

The Importance of Gender-Responsive Policies

By HE Dr. Haifa Al-Agha, Minister of Women's Affairs

Gender equality appears at the top of developmental plans and is incorporated in the policies of national, regional, and international women's organizations as a reflection of their efforts to bridge the gender gap. This entails granting the freedom of choice in making decisions that affect the future and lives of girls and women, thereby enabling both genders to enjoy happiness, contribute to the comprehensive and sustainable development of their communities, and live in dignity and justice. Achieving genuine equality requires comprehensive professional engagement and consolidated institutional efforts that must be extended with full awareness of equality issues. The three key preconditions for the successful devising of policies responsive to the needs of both genders comprise of a strong women's movement, a determined political will, and widespread and comprehensive community awareness.

The feminist movement plays a paramount role in the drafting and implementing of policies that account for the needs of both genders, as it aims to discover and engages to bridge gender gaps. The term feminist movement refers to all national governmental and non-governmental women's organizations and their support mechanisms, including gender units and centers in non-women organizations and governorates. It furthermore includes intellectuals and media professionals who promote gender equality. This movement constitutes the cornerstone for all the policies that are required to fulfill the development needs of all community members. Strength of this movement stems from consensus on specific priority issues and from concerted lobbying efforts that aim to achieve these goals through joint action. When efforts are dispersed, fragmented, and individualized rather than collective, however, activities will be spread thin, and advocates lose the support of their target beneficiaries before they can achieve any goals. In Palestine, the women's movement has achieved visible advancement with



the formation of national committees, including the National Committee to Combat Violence Against Women (2008) and the National Committee for the Application of Resolution 1325 (2012). Successes also include the preparation of strategies for empowerment and equality, such as the *National Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2017-2022*, among others. However, we still need to unite efforts in order to implement policies and promulgate laws that support and protect women's rights. It is necessary to lobby in this direction with full coordination to ensure the influence of the women's movement on the drafting and implementation of urgently necessary legislative and developmental policies.

Political will is the key engine in the drafting and implementing of actual policies that help solve problems and fulfill the needs of all citizens. It is the backbone for the development of all the policies that focus on serving citizens, influencing all the implementing agencies. Political will involves the

Gender literature classifies policies into gender-neutral, gender-responsive, and gender-blind. Regardless of its type, access to information is key in devising any policy, trend, or decision. Thus, in order to guarantee the drafting and implementation of gender-responsive policies, it is important to promote knowledge of gender responsive indicators. This will help produce policies that serve the needs of both genders.



Photo courtesy of UNESCO.

commitment to consider gender needs besides age, area of residency, and economic conditions of targeted segments when policies are devised, thereby adapting policies to the real needs of men and women. However, an effective political will refers not only to the decisions that are taken by the ministerial council, but also to their implementation by concerned agencies. Implementation may not be delayed, and decision may not be marginalized, but must be treated as a priority. This applies also to the policies that aim at gender equality, as devised by the government upon recommendation of the ministry of women's affairs. Between 2012 and 2014, gender units were established in all Palestinian governmental agencies, and communication centers were created in the various governorates; periodic strategies and gender-responsive budgets have been ratified since 2014. The establishment of the National Committee to Combat Violence Against Women in 2008 was another important first step.

But in order to effectively carry out the policies that aim to promote gender equality, decisions taken at the institutional level must be implemented in these institutions – and sets of measures must be put in place to guarantee such implementation. If decision makers fail to give guidance to the concerned technical institutions, these institutions will not be able to implement and achieve the intended goals. Indeed, decisionmakers play a key role by showing a model of political commitment in their respective institutions, commitment that focuses on putting the policies into effect. Increased efforts are a must in this regard.

Increasing community awareness of women's issues and rights will facilitate and speed up the implementation of policies as well. Raising awareness will mitigate resistance to any gender - and women responsive policies, and will raise individual and collective readiness to engage in efforts to achieve gender equality and equality. The women's

movement has deployed tangible efforts to raise public awareness of women's issues through media campaigns, training sessions, and the publication of educational material and studies. For instance, under the leadership of the minister of women's affairs, an awareness campaign was launched on violence against women; International Women's Day is celebrated yearly on March 8; and more targeted campaigns, including house-to-house campaigns to combat violence, have been implemented in a number of governorates. Further recent efforts include a media network that was established by the ministry of women's affairs and several media and radio outlets. Because the ministry realizes that community-

To enhance knowledge of gender-, area-, and income disaggregated indicators, it is necessary to strengthen the women's movement, to empower it, lobby decision makers, and educate the community on equality issues. This will be the stepping stone towards achieving gender equality.



The sign says "Palestine in the eyes of youth." Photo courtesy of UNESCO.

and cultural change require time and effort, we believe that we must coordinate all institutional efforts to launch campaigns that are capable of influencing the public awareness. This requires particularly the development

of school curricula that help shape expectations for the future among children. A general awareness of the importance of equality plays a major role in efforts to change the prevalent cultural stereotypes of women.

Building Gender Accountability in Palestine

Bridging the Policy Gap



By Siham Rashid and
Majd Beltaji

In Palestine, as in any national context, public policies are meant to provide the legal, regulatory, and judicial guidelines, accompanied by the financial commitments, to address issues that benefit the lives of all people in society. Unfortunately, all too often, nearly half the citizens are left out of the equation: women and girls. Palestine is no exception. The commitments are articulated, and (international and national) legal frameworks are endorsed, but there is a burgeoning gap between these national strategies and the reality that women and girls face in Palestinian society. To bridge this gap, we must work to eliminate the institutional and structural barriers that cause or perpetuate gender discrimination and inequalities in our society. A first critical step in this direction is two-fold: to ensure that the government designs policies that allow women and men to determine their own roles in society, and to hold the government accountable for implementation. As the *National Policy Agenda (2017–2022)* states, the government will focus on putting its citizens first. We citizens, women and men, must then support the government to achieve this aim.

Gender equality remains a priority for the State of Palestine, as reflected in the current *National Policy Agenda*, the accession to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international human rights treatiesⁱ in 2014; the *Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2017–2022*, and the *National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women 2011–2019*. By acceding to CEDAW, the State of Palestine has



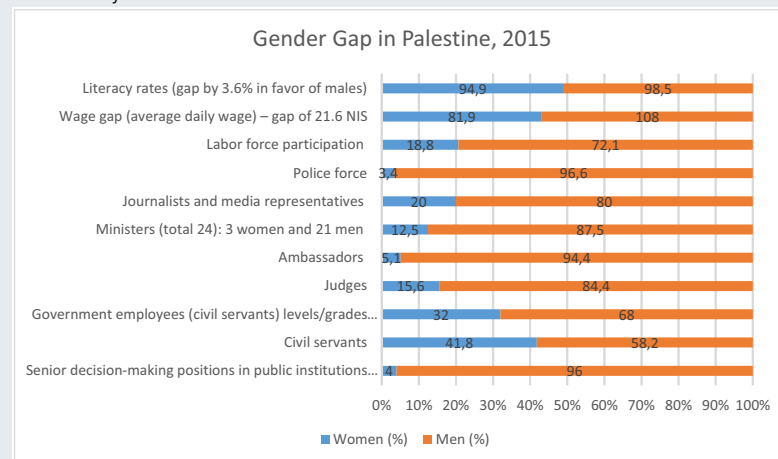
Photo courtesy of irinnews.org

assumed legal obligations to ensure the equal rights of men and women and the protection of women's human rights. Nevertheless, as reported by the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) and civil-society organizations, national legislation is required for the incorporation of CEDAW provisions and other international agreements in order to regulate the merger of these treaties in the national legal system.

ICHR argues that “the socio-cultural, economic, and political reality for

Palestinian women is one where discrimination and gender inequality remain pervasive and women do not enjoy the same rights as men.”ⁱⁱ The ICHR also notes that these gaps emanate from power relations, including gender-blind legislation.ⁱⁱⁱ Gender-blind policies risk the perpetuation of further oppression and undermine the realization of gender equality. The chart below illustrates the findings of an ICHR and PCBS (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics) report^{iv} on the status of women in public life.

Chart courtesy of Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.



A recent survey, the *International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)*,^v found that in Palestine “men and women appear to hold more positive views of women’s rights and equal roles in the public sphere than in private life.”^{vi} However, the above-mentioned statistics indicate that the participation of women in public life and their employment status remain low. While the literacy rate and other gains have been achieved by women and girls, these have yet to translate into greater empowerment and participation in public life.

It is therefore vital that these gaps be addressed through a range of multidimensional initiatives – from focusing on changing gender norms and practices to eliminating discriminatory laws and public



Research shows that the entire family benefits when fathers get involved in taking care of children and housework. Photo courtesy of UN Women.

policies. This, however, cannot be achieved by one institution or entity alone. It takes many actors to craft opportunities and create an environment for women’s inclusion and influence in the public sphere. From the household and school to the office and ministries, men and women must work collectively to bring about gender equality.

While there are actors working to amend existing discriminatory laws, produce academic reports, and provide services and advocacy for change, there is no one body that conducts analysis and produces evidence-based gender-policy recommendations and briefs. Moreover, there is an absence of progress reporting on policy implementation and how policies affect (negatively or positively) women. Thus, nobody provides recommendations on how to follow up on and improve or refocus gender-equality policies. In the absence of an active facilitator for policy discourse on gender equality, there is no “safe space” to have such a debate. The consequent lack of coordination and follow-up contributes to the accountability gap.

It is clear that there is ample space and consensus for policies to improve gender equality in Palestine, and although traditions and customs play a critical role in the hindrance of this achievement, the *IMAGES MENA* study shows that the more prevalent problem is institutional – that inequalities are at times perpetrated from the highest levels of authority, the duty-bearers. This is where the Gender Policy Institute (GPI) comes in. Initiated in 2016, GPI is presently under the management of UNESCO and funded by the Government of Norway; it is in the final stages of becoming an independent national entity. The GPI builds on and advances the work of the Palestinian Women’s Research and Documentation Center, a program of UNESCO that was implemented from 2006 to 2015.

GPI works in partnership with the ministry of women’s affairs (MoWA) and governmental institutions (whole-of-government), and in close coordination with policy makers, practitioners, academics and academic institutions, the private sector, and others in order to create

change and challenge policy direction through evidence-based data and information. In this context, GPI will conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses of gender-equality policies that contribute to shaping the policy debate in Palestine so that in 2018 and beyond, GPI’s products and services will result in policies that contribute to gender equality and an environment that is conducive to women’s empowerment.

Ms. Siham Rashid is the Executive Director of the Gender Policy Research Institute (GPI)/UNESCO and holds an MSc in public policy and management from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

Ms. Majd Beltaji is the Gender Equality Programme Specialist at UNESCO Ramallah Office, and holds an MA in international cooperation and development and a BA in political science and media.

ⁱ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention Against Torture (CAT), Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

ⁱⁱ Independent Commission for Human Rights (2016), *Fact Sheet: Discrimination and Inequality Gap in Gender Rights*. See <http://ichr.ps/en/1/17/1541/Sheet-of-Facts-Discrimination-and-Inequality-Gap-in-Gender-Rights.htm>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Independent Commission for Human Rights, *Annual Report 2015*, <http://ichr.ps/en/1/6/1941/ICHR-21st-Annual-Report.htm> pp. 93–95 and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2016) Press Release: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/WomenDy2016E.pdf.

^v *International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)* conducted in four countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including Palestine in 2017.

^{vi} Promundo and UN Women (2017), *IMAGES MENA*, retrieved from (page 212): <https://imagesmena.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/05/IMAGES-MENA-Multi-Country-Report-EN-16May2017-web.pdf>.



Abolishing Early Marriage



By Aisha Saifi

As we are celebrating International Woman's Day, we should remember that in Palestine, awareness of the importance of women's full participation in public life must be increased. We must make sure that women's voices are being heard when decisions are made and new policies developed, so as a society we can move ahead. For example, Palestine cannot continue to accept that its legislation is derived from outdated Ottoman and Jordanian laws – in many cases, these are indeed applied even today. Numerous laws that are relevant to women's equality and regulate issues that range from violence against women, to divorce, inheritance, and more, have not been adopted or amended, even though such adaptations are required by international conventions Palestine has signed.

On March 8, we should look back at what we have achieved as women, both in Palestine and around the world, so we can learn from the past and strategize our future efforts. Our perseverance will pay off. We must continue to strive for being treated as equals, with the respect and dignity that we deserve and have worked hard for in all aspects of our communities, be it in the political, social, academic, or economic realms. Community change needs women, men, and youth to unite in order to achieve a society that respects equal rights. We all must work together to develop bold programs and endorse legislation that is implemented

and monitored. In this way, we can reach our aim of creating a society that is governed by social justice and does not tolerate discrimination. To this end, the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs has issued the *National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women 2011-2019*ⁱ with the foremost objective to promote the rule of law, based on women's rights, and to improve institutional mechanisms in Palestinian society that protect and support abused women and enable them to live fulfilling lives.

We have reached technological advancement in Palestine; yet, sexual violence is an existing social phenomenon. The women who have been violated rarely share what they have experienced, because they fear

March 8 is not a day to celebrate, rather it is a day to commemorate the intense efforts put forth over the last decades by women who have suffered from extensive injustice and took action.

among girls and young women,ⁱⁱ while those who pursue studies towards a degree tend to remain confined to the fields that are socially-accepted for women. Moreover, Palestinian women



Participants at an awareness-raising session in Jerusalem, 2017.

the reaction of the perpetrators and social stigma. Unofficial and limited-in-scope statistics indicate that domestic violence against women has increased in recent years. Numerous community organizations, including the Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPFA) are engaged in work that aims to lower the percentage of women who are being violated.

Another important aspect that must be considered when assessing the status of women is the role of education. In Palestinian communities, equal education has hardly been achieved. Research carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the UN reveals an increased drop-out rate

face difficulties when wishing to embark on a career, as frequently their options are limited to office-support and administrative positions such as clerk typists, secretaries, and administrative assistants. Employers who engaged in unfair hiring practices attempt to justify their discriminatory hiring decisions by claiming that women lack the skills and qualifications necessary to perform non-traditional and higher-paid positions – without further proof of their claims. Such mental and social violence against women remains largely hidden. Prevailing discrimination is reflected, however, in the available job opportunities and the number of decision-making positions available to



Women are key to a country's development. Their knowledge, education, and labor form the basis upon which children may grow and prosper.



women, both in business organizations and in the various sectors of civil society and government. Discrimination exists as well in the enforcement of rules and regulations, which all too often is clearly biased in favor of men. All these faces of violence must be dealt with in order to build a healthy and productive society.

Gathering at the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on December 12, 2017.



Open day held at Peace Park in Hebron on November 1, 2017.

One important step in this direction is to take action against early marriage. One of the aims of the PFPPA is to work to this end in cooperation with civil community organizations. On March 8, we will target various agencies with the aim of persuading them to assure that relevant laws are enforced by the year 2019. The Palestinian Authority has signed on to the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1997. More than two decades later, early marriage is still an existing phenomenon. Early marriage violates the rights of girls; it frequently puts an end to their schooling, and entails forced sexual relations and early childbearing. Moreover, girls who marry at a younger age are generally

more vulnerable to spousal violence than girls who wait longer to marry. Child marriage tends to perpetuate a cycle of poverty, low education, high fertility, and poor health, which hinders the economic and social development of a society. Laws that set a minimum age for marriage are an important way to avert that boys and girls are being married before they are ready. It is important that children are recognized in the law as being children, and that they are accorded full protection.

The Palestinian government musts issue and enforce clear and consistent legislation that establishes the age of 18 years as the minimum age for marriage. Adequate safeguards must be put in place to ensure that parental consent or other exceptions may not be used to force girls into early marriage. Such laws serve as an important tool to help those working to dissuade families and communities from marrying off their daughters as children. They provide an objective, rather than subjective standard of maturity, which safeguards children from being married when they are neither physically, nor mentally or emotionally ready. Why should children be allowed to marry at an age at which, for example, they do not have the right to vote or to enter into other contracts recognized by law? Setting a minimum age for marriage will also help ensure that children are able to give their free and full consent to marriage, as they will make this important decision when they have the required minimum level of maturity. In this way, we will grant both girls and boys their right to obtain a full education and the opportunity to build a stable atmosphere, before they embark on their life journey.

The higher the participation and employment of women under decent conditions, the greater the prevalence of social justice and economic growth.

We should be able to celebrate each year on March 8 that women have obtained their full rights and the freedom of taking their own decisions. Constituting the half of the society who brought the other half into life, women have the responsibly to help lead society towards a more humane level. We have tried relying on men's sole leadership – and have failed miserably.

What should be the minimum age for marriage and why?

Aisha Saifi is a program director at the Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association PFPPA in Ramallah.

Article photos courtesy of PFPPA.

The Representative Office of Norway to the Palestinian Authority is a partner to the Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association.

ⁱ Palestinian National Committee to Combat Violence Against Women, *National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women 2011-2019*, Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs, available at http://www.lacs.ps/documentsShow.aspx?ATT_ID=5501

ⁱⁱ Development for Empowerment, *The 2014 Human Development Report: Education*, available at <http://www.ps.undp.org/content/dam/papp/docs/Publications/UNDP-papp-research-PHDR2015Education.pdf>; and *Press Release on the International Youth Day, August 12, 2017*, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, available at http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_10-8-2017-youth-en.pdf.

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Palestinian Women's Political Participation and Access to Decision-Making

Challenges and Prospects



Courtesy of MIFTAH

What is political participation? A prevalent misconception tends to restrict political participation to being elected to and holding public office. However, international conventions, as a reflection of the international community's understanding, encompass a number of rights within the framework of political participation, namely, the right to vote in elections and public referenda; to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy; to hold public office and perform public functions at all levels of government; to participate in nongovernmental organizations and associations that are relevant to the public and political life of the country;ⁱ to represent the government on the international level; and to participate in the work of international organizations.ⁱⁱ

Palestinian women face a complicated reality in terms of political participation and access to decision making. Palestinian feminist and human rights movements have registered a number of important achievements over the past years in terms of addressing legal and structural discrimination and advancing equality among various social groups as a major principle of democracy. These achievements include the amendment of the Palestinian Elections Law, securing a 20 percent quota representation in local councils and the Legislative Council, and the ratification without reservations of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Despite these achievements, however, gender disparities remain significant in numerous aspects of life, including political participation and access to decision-making positions, resulting in discrimination against women in terms of access to opportunity. Discrimination against women within this framework refers to "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."ⁱⁱⁱ

In the public sector, for example, the proportion of women who occupy decision-making positions is restricted

The reasons for the mediocre representation of Palestinian women in public life include the major comprehensive regression in political participation in Palestine (partly caused by the internal division), a general decline in political parties and discourse, and a lack of rejuvenation that increases the existing significant generation gap in political participation.



Photo courtesy of middleeasteye.net.

to 11.7 percent, with females comprising only 16 percent of deputy ministers, 3 percent of assistant undersecretaries, and 12 percent of general directors.^{iv} This figure rises to 22.7 percent in terms of the proportion of women assuming the position of minister, with 5 of a total of 22 ministers being women. However, there is only one female governor among a total of 16, and only one woman among the 18-member PLO Executive Committee.^v On the level of external

representation, the findings remain dire, with females comprising only 5.8 percent of Palestinian ambassadors.^{vi} Figures do not improve significantly on the judicial level, as only 17.2 percent of the judiciary^{vii} and 16.7 percent of the public prosecution staff are women.^{viii}

With respect to the Palestinian Legislative Council, the 20 percent representation quota is only imposed on the proportional representation component and has led to the election of 17 women out of a total of 132 seats

(12.9 percent) on the council. With respect to the municipal elections, both the 2012 and 2017 elections rendered a 21 percent representation of women, with over 55 percent of those women winning by acclamation.^{ix}

The continued internal division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has restricted democratic processes to only the 2005, 2012, and 2017 municipal elections and the 2006 legislative council elections. Furthermore, the division has had a compounded impact on Palestinian women in Gaza, since the 2012 and 2017 municipal elections only took place in the West Bank. In addition, the paralysis of the Palestinian Legislative Council raises tensions in strategies for legal reform. In light of the impossibility of amending legislation through democratic channels, the feminist movement and stakeholders are left to face the dilemma of whether to seek advancement and improvement of women's rights through presidential decrees – and risk the dissemination of an undemocratic mentality of centralization and the absence of separation of authorities.

A closer look at the conditions that surround women's political participation and access to decision-making reveals that, similar to other areas, gender-based discrimination and mediocre political participation and access to decision-making positions in Palestine are primarily fueled by societal patriarchy. This, however, does not negate the multitude of factors that further exacerbate the situation as a whole. Traditions and customs, which perpetuate the perception that women are auxiliary to their male counterparts, including father, brother, and even son, are major impediments that reinforce and further entrench societal patriarchy.

On another level, notwithstanding the importance of securing the 20 percent quota, this advancement remains insufficient for a number of reasons. Firstly, the legal amendment has not fulfilled its desired role of also affecting the societal belief that women are

inferior to men. The election of women to local councils barely passed the 20 percent threshold, standing at 21.2 percent in 2017^x and 21.0 percent in 2012,^{xi} and did not enable active and true participation, in light of the absence of a conducive environment that challenges societal patriarchy. In addition, simple measures, such as ensuring that streets have adequate lighting, would have encouraged women's participation in local councils and in the wider arena of public life, particularly in more liberal and progressive communities.

Furthermore, despite women's (albeit limited) penetration into the public sphere, it was not matched by men shouldering a larger portion of responsibility in the private sphere. The majority of these women still assume full responsibility for household affairs, which hinders their effective and true participation in public life.

On a more general level, the Palestinian political scene has witnessed major and comprehensive regression in political participation. This has had an inherent compounded and disproportionate impact on vulnerable and marginalized social groups, including women, youth, and people with disability, among others. A number of reasons have led to this overall regression, including the internal Palestinian division, which halted the regular exercise of democratic processes. Another factor is the decline in Palestinian political parties, which is mirrored in an inadequate and below-par discourse that does not fulfil national aspirations. This is primarily informed by the absence of rejuvenation and integration of the younger generation, which in and of itself is exacerbating an already significant generation gap.

A final factor in this framework is the absence of a civil society strategy and the prioritization of advancing political participation. The vast majority of civil society organizations work on political participation at the time of elections. Furthermore, the overall approach

is one that deals with the issue of participation, including political participation, on a project basis, instead of on a national priority basis. This is reflected in the failure to significantly affect the perception that women are inferior to men through the proper utilization of the media and insufficient efforts to reform the educational system in order to disseminate the values of gender equality and active citizenship.

So what are the possible steps forward? Within the existing framework, a



Palestinian women leaders met at a National Gathering in November 2016 to engage in a dialogue and address some of the issues that concern women in the context of politics and communities. Photo courtesy of MIFTAH.

number of measures are paramount to addressing and promoting women's political participation. Despite the ratification without reservations of CEDAW on April 1, 2014, the Palestinian polity has yet to publish the decision in its official paper; this is a very important step to demonstrate the political will to work on advancing political participation. This political will needs to materialize through taking serious steps towards harmonizing national legislation with international standards in order to guarantee, at least minimally, the elimination of discrimination against women. This extends beyond

The political will towards greater inclusion of women in political processes needs to be made tangible, and important steps must be taken to harmonize national legislation with international standards, especially in such legislation as the personal status law and penal code.

The many challenges and obstacles that impede women's political participation in Palestine manifest themselves in the low representation of women not only in decision-making positions within public institutions but also in the various political factions, such that women's representation barely exceeds the minimal representation of 20 percent, guaranteed through the quota.

legislation that regulates political participation, to include legislation that maintains women's inferiority, such as the personal status law and penal code.

Furthermore, and on a similar level, there is a need to capitalize on the decision, handed down by Judge Ahmed Al-Ashqar, to give supremacy to human rights conventions over national laws. This is an instrumental asset to be utilized with the view to increasing quota representation from 20 percent to 30 percent and imposing the quota on the districts component of the Palestinian Legislative Council elections. This could also be further utilized to promote youth participation, particularly that of young women, by

system, and utilizing the media. With respect to political factions, there is a need to secure their commitments and ensure the implementation of bylaw reform with the view to promoting the political participation of women and youth, particularly at the decision-making levels.

On another level, gender-responsive planning and budgeting at the municipal levels remains important in order to address the disproportionate impact of intersectional oppression and marginalization, including that of age and gender, through strengthening women's capacities to engage and influence the formulation and development of community and fiscal

policies, as well as prioritize the needs and rights of various social groups. It is crucial within this context to promote participatory planning, including its reflection in the rules and regulations of local government units, in order to give value to subsequent participatory budgeting.

Ultimately, there is a need to reform the educational system, including both curriculum and teacher rehabilitation, to address perceptions of women's inferiority and their status as auxiliary to men. Only then can societal patriarchy be dismantled and addressed, and the sustainability of interventions promoted.

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, MIFTAH, is a Palestinian civil society organization, established in 1998 in Jerusalem, which seeks to promote the principles of democracy and good governance within various segments of Palestinian society through leading in-depth dialogue and the free flow of information and ideas.

The Representative Office of Norway to the Palestinian Authority is a partner to MIFTAH.



Participants in the conference titled Women's Call: One Country, One People, One Flag that was organized by MIFTAH and other civil society organizations on 15 June 2015. It was held in Ramallah and Gaza simultaneously, communicating via video conferencing. Photo courtesy of MIFTAH.

decreasing the candidacy age and exploring the possibility of introducing a youth quota.

There is a need to develop and reach consensus through the promotion of platforms for dialogue on a collective women's agenda that sets women's priorities and confirms demands in relation to political participation and access to decision making. This agenda is envisioned to unify women's efforts towards increasing political participation at decision-making levels, engaging political factions, influencing values created by the educational

Enhancing women's political participation can be achieved through working on a multi-level strategy: amending laws and legislations, formulating a national policy that is supportive of women's political participation, changing procedures, and last but not least, affecting behavioral change through raising awareness of women's rights, reforming the educational system, and utilizing the media.



A conference titled UNSCR 1325 15th Anniversary: Challenges and Prospects was held in Amman, Jordan, to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. Photo courtesy of MIFTAH.

ⁱ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (adopted 18 December 1979, entered into force on September 3, 1981), 1249 UNTS 13 (CEDAW), Article 7.

ⁱⁱ CEDAW (n 1), Article 8.

ⁱⁱⁱ CEDAW (n 1), Article 1.

^{iv} Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics* (in Arabic, 2016), p. 55.

^v Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, *Palestinian Women's Bulletin* (PASSIA, August 2015), p. 10.

^{vi} PCBS, *Women and Men in Palestine*, p. 58.

^{vii} PCBS, *Women and Men in Palestine*, p. 61.

^{viii} PCBS, *Women and Men in Palestine*, p. 63.

^{ix} Central Elections Commission, Palestine, *2017 Local Elections Report* (CEC 2017), p. 306.

^x Central Elections Committee, *Local Council Elections Report* (CEC, 2017), p. 305.

^{xi} Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, *Palestinian Women's Bulletin* (PASSIA, 2015), p. 10.

Economic Independence

A Prerequisite for the Social and Political Participation of Palestinian Women



By Amani Aruri

As other women in the MENA region, Palestinian women face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to participate in many aspects of life. However, Palestinian women carry compound burdens on their shoulders. Women in Palestinian society have been struggling for a long time to gain their rights not just as women, but also as human beings. Palestinian laws and legislation are discriminatory against women, and the local women's movement has been defending the rights of women by influencing society and demanding from policy makers a positive change in the legal system in order to protect and empower women. In addition, the practices and restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation affect the daily lives of every Palestinian woman, making it even harder for women to consider increasing their participation in the economic, political, and social arenas.



Photo by Sharif Sarhan, courtesy of UNDP.

In many countries, women make up a majority of the workforce.ⁱ However, they continue to receive unequal pay and unequal access to high-level positions and higher-paying jobs. In the Palestinian case, even women's representation in the workforce is minimal. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), women's labor-force participation rate in 2017 reached 19.3 percent compared to 71.6 percent for that of men.ⁱⁱ

There is a prevailing assumption that increasing women's economic participation – hence helping them achieve economic independence – would increase their ability to influence decision-making processes, increase their participation rate in political life, and help change society's attitude towards women. Palestine's society is still based on patriarchal structures and the traditional division of roles between men and women. When men are dominant in families, it is more difficult to increase women's influence on decision-making processes on the national, societal, and family levels. However, the economic hardship within Palestinian society could serve as a positive factor, assuming that increased economic independence of women would improve not only their contribution to the GDP but also their participation in social and political fields, which would positively impact society as a whole.

Many nonworking Palestinian women state that they are prevented from attending workshops, training sessions, and capacity-building programs - and even from participating in the election process. Men justify banning women from participation in activities outside the home (especially in rural areas) by asserting that a woman's only role is as a caregiver who does the housework and raises children. They do not see any need for women to "waste" their time on any other activities. Given that the men are the working breadwinners, they assume the right to control all

Just as in many Arab countries, the majority of Palestinian women have been deprived of social, economic, and political rights. The cultural and social context is a contributing factor in their low societal status. Women have been deprived of equal access to training and to gainful employment opportunities, and their involvement in policy- and decision-making processes has been minimal.

women's activities and available resources. The question is: how would this attitude be changed if women were to work and receive income?

Through delivering training sessions and workshops to women activists and asking them how their jobs have affected their roles in their families and in their societies, the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) has found that many women report that their engaging in work outside the home has changed their families' attitude towards them and increased their families' appreciation and respect. When women receive income, their families' perception of their role changes. Furthermore, women report that families impose less control on their movements when they work in a regular job, and that they have more control over their income. Married working women state that their husbands are increasingly accepting a share of the responsibilities at home. This not only reflects men's increased appreciation of women's financial contribution to the family, but also working women's increased

awareness of gender discrimination and of their rights as women. Working women are generally more involved in awareness-raising activities, organized by women's organizations to increase society's awareness of gender-based violence and gender discrimination. And gender-based violence not only refers to physical violence but also to economic and social violence. It is worth mentioning that non-income-related skills that women gain through their economic participation, such as advocacy skills, increase their confidence and agency. Moreover, the networks women build through their work and involvement in social and political activities play an important role in increasing their participation in decision-making processes and the political arena.

Many women, through their work, have been able to take part in committees, councils, and other important memberships that broaden their potential and lead them to take on significant roles in their communities, which eventually enable them to initiate positive change. Such developments would not be possible if women had not changed the attitudes of their families, since this is the first step in influencing the community.

Amani Aruri holds a master's degree in economics from Birzeit University. She has managed innovative programs that help youth and women in Palestine aim for brighter careers. She is currently an advocacy team leader at the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, general secretary of the Palestinian Economists Association, and an assembly member of UNWomen Gender Innovation AGORA.

"Economic participation is the magic wand held by working women and has become the means to ensure their access to their political and social goals. Any political position needs a strong woman, and the strength of women in our society begins with their economic independence.

Before I worked, I used to be defined by my husband, and I didn't have an identity. I had no control over the decisions in my life, and I had always to follow my family. After engaging in work, however, I have been able to attain many positions that I had always felt scared to even dream about. I now have a strong presence in the political and social arenas, and more importantly, I have the only say in any decision that concerns my life."

Nadwa Barghouthi, board member at the Women's Affairs Technical Committee, programs manager at the Association of Women's Committees for Social Work, and member of the Fatah Regional Committee.



Women activists from Hebron at a training workshop on economic development. Photo courtesy of the author.

The Representative Office of Norway to the Palestinian Authority is a partner to the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling.

ⁱ Janell Fetterolf, "In many countries, at least four-in-ten in the labor force are women," *Pew Research Center*, March 2017, available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/07/in-many-countries-at-least-four-in-ten-in-the-labor-force-are-women/>, and "Women in informal economy," *UNWomen*, available at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw/women-in-informal-economy>.

ⁱⁱ "Press Release on the Results of the Labor Force Survey in Palestine, 2016," *Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics*, available at <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=1854>.



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Women's Sports

Major Challenges and Two Key Solutions



By Malak Hasan

It could be argued that the level of female participation in sports is a strong indication of women's status in a society. The low representation of women in sports in Palestine, and the extent to which sexist remarks and inaccurate labels are thrown at sportswomen on a daily basis, have become increasingly obvious to me ever since I took up boxing, became more involved in the local sports scene, and was elected to serve as secretary-general of the Palestinian Boxing Federation. It was tolerable until one day, when I was accused by a male member of a sports federation of neglecting my duties towards my husband and God, because I had chosen to join a cycling trip with a group of friends. The attack did not end there, and my decision to join a boxing gym was condemned under the pretext that martial arts make women aggressive and therefore should be restricted to men. Although it is normal and refreshing for activists in any field to face opposition, since it fuels them to continue to fight and work for a better society, it is a different story when those who believe that women should not play sports are the very people who are entrusted with sports in Palestine.

To fully capture the Palestinian sports scene and see what is being done to ensure equal support for women in sports, I spoke to Dr. Nibal Khalil, an athlete herself, who serves as vice president of the Palestinian Olympic Committee, head of international relations, and president of the newly founded Women's Sports Committee. As the only female member in a male-dominated executive committee that oversees the development of Palestinian sports, she claims that there have been significant strides in women's sports over the last few years, something that she had not thought was possible.



Aseel Yousef coaching a class at Elbarrio gym.
Photo courtesy of Elbarrio.

Citing a number of reasons for the slow and unstable growth in women's sports in Palestine, Dr. Khalil highlighted the Israeli occupation, although indirect in effect. "Living under occupation has rendered sports an irrelevant luxury," she admits. As the main reason, however, Dr. Khalil cited the numerous social, economic, and personal challenges that Palestinian women face, which make it much more difficult to become a professional athlete or pursue a career in sports management. "We live in a male-dominated world where culture is shaped by a male perspective and sports are deemed inappropriate, especially in villages and Bedouin communities. Many people believe that engaging in sports will harm girls physically and limit their prospects for getting married or conceiving children," she explains.

Living in a conservative society where women are advised against mixing with men, let alone training with them, makes the decision to play sports almost inconceivable in some regions. Natali Shaheen, 23, a football coach from Jericho, notes that there are very few sports clubs that cater to women who want to play sports in a female-only setting, especially in villages. Therefore, they have no option but

In order to change negative perceptions surrounding sports and women, sports must become an integral part of the school curriculum, and experts who are capable of identifying talents should teach physical education.



Photo courtesy of Natali Shaheen.

to forgo the idea. At the same time, boys and men have unlimited access to streets and warehouses, which renders sports very accessible, even when resources are limited. "When I was young and training," she explains, "I used to travel from Jericho to Ramallah twice a week to play football. You do not find many parents willing to allow their young daughters to travel alone to a different city just to play a sport."

And when lack of infrastructure is coupled with a lack of awareness about the benefits of sports, the problem is much tougher to tackle.

The dearth of research and statistics on women in sports in Palestine makes it very difficult to address the obstacles and find long-term solutions.

Many sportswomen agree that the lack of awareness about the importance of sports and its benefits for girls and women is weakening efforts to see women's sports thrive in Palestine.

Amani Manassra, 33, is a Crossfit coach who has been training for ten years and coaching for close to three-and-a-half years. She said that Palestinian society expects women to be strong in everything from running a home to raising children and taking care of every aspect of the family's well-being, yet society

objects to sports, an integral part of a human being's mental and physical strength. "I faced much criticism for being a female coach who lifts heavy weights. Many men who came to the gym opposed or resented the idea that a woman could train them to lift weights. I learned that they have nothing personal against me, but they find it difficult to accept something that they are not used to."

And even women who have access to sports facilities are not always able to exercise or play sports because they are not financially independent, which deprives them of the power to choose.

Hiba Al-Ghoul is an announcer for international matches and an administrator who works for the Palestinian Football Association. She shared that one of the main issues facing female athletes is the inability to make personal choices, making their participation in sports events and trainings dependent on permission given by their families. She recalled

that at a FIFA camp, many of the women who enrolled in a referees' training session failed to show up because they were not allowed to stay out late or sleep outside the house. Others were forced to skip the camp because of house chores, pregnancy, or having to look after their children. "Unfortunately, our society does not support women who want to venture into the world of sports. Many of the female athletes have no income or salary and play with no return. Finances play a huge role in motivating athletes and increasing participation," she explained.

According to a study conducted by Samar Al-Araj from Bethlehem University on the "Obstacles that Face Arab Women in Leading Positions in the Field of Sports in the Asian Arab Countries," it was found that women are marginalized in sports because of social reasons first, then because of educational and personal abilities. The study showed that a large percentage of men are unwilling to accept women as superiors in sports institutions. Not only that, but family and relatives' interference, society's lack of confidence in women's abilities, men's conviction that women must not have a priority other than the household, and the lack of necessary freedom of movement that is required to work in sports all add insult to injury. Al-Araj recommended that more efforts should be exerted to improve the organizational structure, and that laws and policies should be passed in the national Olympic committees and sports federations to increase women's participation in sports.

Although laws and rules can play a role in supporting women's sports, media must do more to help change social perceptions when it comes to the rights and capabilities of women and girls in sports; for example, by highlighting their successes.



Photo courtesy of Natali Shaheen.

And while some believe that the answer lies in laws and policies, others think that media is the tool to shift opinions. Sajeda Sweiti, 25, is the first woman in Hebron to host a weekly sports radio show. At first there was resistance to the idea of her hosting a sports radio show, but she has become a successful and well-known sports journalist. Since the launch of her show, she has been working to shed light on women's sports and break the mental and social barriers associated with sports and women. But she cannot drive change alone. "I barely hear male radio hosts cover the matches and achievements of women's football or basketball teams," she notes. "Maybe they cover some events, but there is insufficient coverage of women's sports on Palestinian radio stations."

Everyone interviewed agreed that the most effective way to promote sports among girls and women and dismantle negative perceptions in our society is

Tala Halawa judging a CrossFit competition. Photo by Rami Samara.



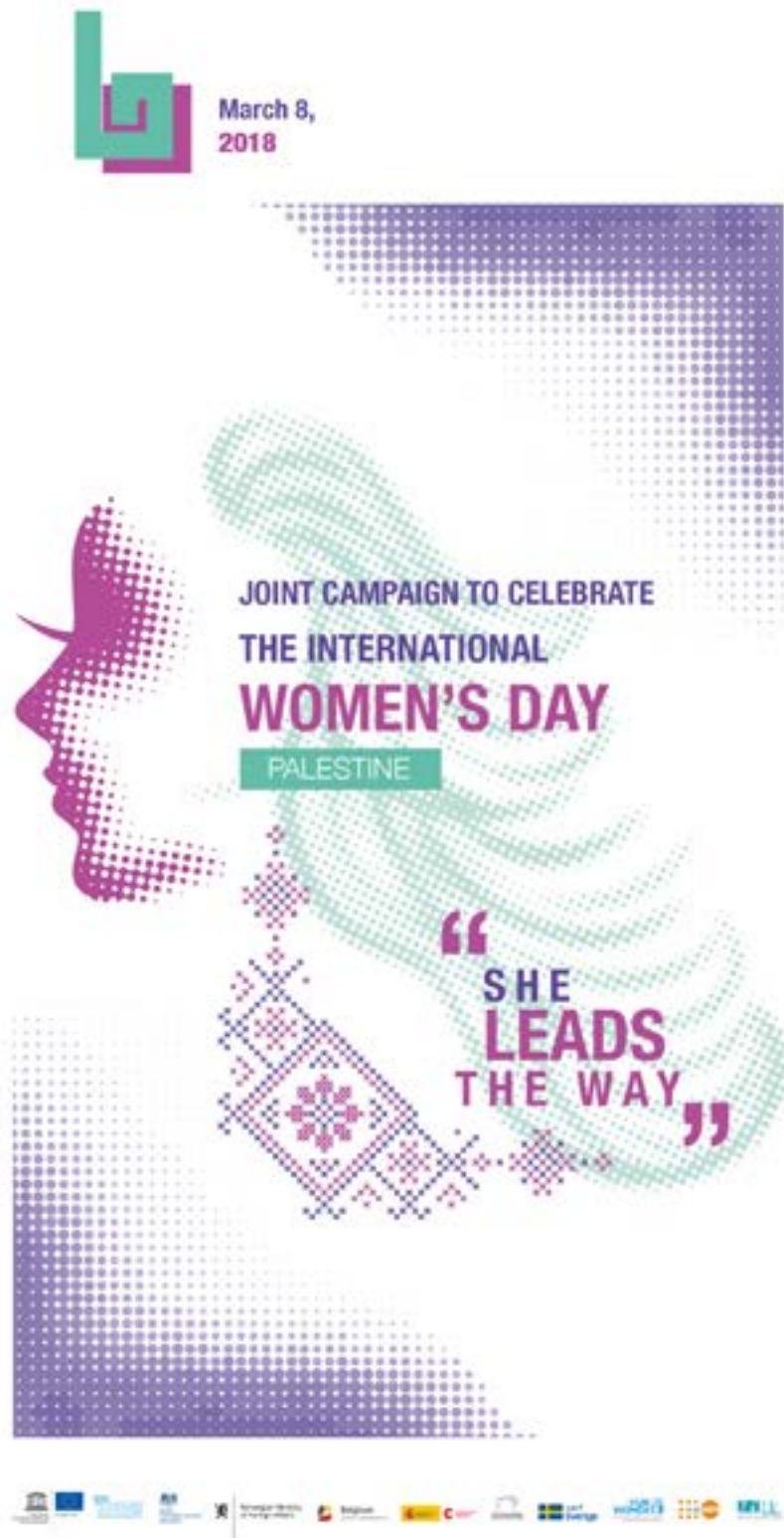
Photo courtesy of UNDP.

through school sports and media. Dr. Khalil explained that Palestinians need a more vocal media that highlights women's sports and successes until they become a part of Palestinian culture. In addition, all sports federations should strive to increase the presence of women, and focus on promoting women's sports in schools and recruiting female students, because professional athletes are made in schools. Progress cannot be complete without an efficient mechanism to fight dropout; and universities must create athletic scholarships to encourage female and male athletes to continue to compete, instead of abandoning sports in favor of academia.

Al Bireeh Club in action, Deema Said in front. Photo courtesy of Deema Said.

Football, volleyball, basketball, table tennis, swimming, and track and field are the most common sports among Palestinian women. Martial arts have the lowest rate of women's participation, with the exception of Tae Kwon Do.

Malak Hasan is head of the Palestine News Agency Wafa's English page, secretary-general of the Palestinian Boxing Federation, co-founder and media coordinator of Cycling Palestine, and founder of the Women in Sports Network | Palestine. You can follow her on Facebook @journalistmalakhasan.





A New World Order

Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Peace and Development



By Emmicki Roos

Throughout my work for gender equality and women's rights in the United Nations and civil society, I have seen first-hand how women's empowerment and peace and development are interlinked. This has led me to the conclusion that we need to refrain from referring to the violence and discrimination that women face as women's issues, and must start seeing it for what it really is, our issues – issues that negatively affect all of humanity and stand in our way of achieving peace and sustainable development. Women and girls are an untapped resource globally, and the State of Palestine is no exception. Ensuring women's equal and meaningful participation in state building and in the peace and reconciliation process, and making solid investments in women and girls' health and education are likely to yield positive results for all Palestinians.

While women's equal rights and opportunities are an objective in itself, it is time that we recognize that the same violent masculinities who cause the violation of women's human rights also cause conflict, fragility, and a lack of human development. It is important to note that the women's movement that in 1979 successfully advocated for the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and in 2000 brought about UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, not only pursued equal rights for men and women. It envisioned a new world order – a paradigm shift towards a holistic and people-centered approach to peace and development.

At the end of the Cold War a new security model emerged, known as human security. It reinforced what the women's movement had been asserting for decades, namely that peace and security need to be inclusive. Efforts and implementation must focus on the needs of people and move beyond traditional security models. This was articulated by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2001, when he stated, "Today, we know that 'security' means far more than the absence of conflict... We know that lasting peace requires a broader vision, encompassing areas such as education and health, democracy and human rights, [and] protection against environmental degradation and the proliferation of deadly weapons. We know that we cannot be secure amidst starvation, that we cannot build peace without alleviating poverty, and that we cannot build freedom on foundations of injustice. These pillars of what we now understand as the people-centered concept of 'human security' are interrelated and mutually reinforcing."¹

Photo courtesy of UN Women.



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Research and experience worldwide have established that women's empowerment and gender equality are linked to peace and sustainable development.



Despite the concept of human security, and even though evidence suggests that gender equality is a better indicator of the peacefulness and stability of a state than other parameters such as democracy and gross domestic product (GDP), the linkages between women's empowerment and peace and sustainable development have largely been ignored.ⁱⁱ Failing to recognize violence against women as an early warning indicator of conflict and fragility, when evidence shows that there is a correlation between violence against women and conflict, and one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence worldwide, is negligent.ⁱⁱⁱ In the Palestinian context, where 29.9 percent of ever-married women in the West Bank and 51 percent in the Gaza Strip have experienced some form of violence at home, addressing gender-based violence must be a cornerstone in building a viable state.^{iv}

While most policymakers recognize that the security and development of a state have an impact on women's lives, there is still some way to go until it is fully recognized that inversely, the security and rights of women have an impact on the security and development of the state. A step in the right direction was the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs) by world leaders in 2015, as Goal 5 specifically focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and gender equality commitments are integrated throughout the other 15 goals. Whereas this is an important recognition of how gender equality and women's

empowerment are linked with sustainable development, efforts are needed to sustain the momentum and ensure that women and girls are not left behind, as happened so many times in the past. Successful realization of the SDGs in the State of Palestine requires that all stakeholders acknowledge the transformational nature of women's empowerment and gender equality, and safeguard that it is an integral part of all implementation efforts.

Nowhere is the lack of an inclusive and people-centered approach more apparent than at the peace negotiating table. According to UN Women's 2015 Global Study on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, an analysis of peace processes between 1992 and 2011 revealed that only 2 percent of chief mediators, 4 percent of witnesses and signatories, and 9 percent of negotiators were women. Considering the bleak track record for peacemaking, as more than half of the peace processes that lead to an agreement slip back into conflict within five years, and with research showing that women's participation in a peace process leads to a significant increase in the likelihood that an agreement will be reached and implemented, there is no justification for the utilization of traditional approaches that exclude women. This was best summarized by a woman peace activist who explained that "few patients would choose a heart surgeon with only a 50 percent chance of success, and yet the international community continues to choose operating models with a low effectiveness rate, even when presented with evidence of better options."^v Learning from over 70 years of failed peacemaking processes, the State of Palestine has the opportunity to amend its approach that thus far has excluded women – making it more inclusive, and guaranteeing women's equal and meaningful participation in all peace and reconciliation efforts.

An analysis of peace negotiations that were undertaken between 1992 and 2011 shows that the success rate of reaching an agreement, and the likelihood of implementation, are higher when women are involved in the negotiation process.

In addition to peace, gender equality is closely linked to a wide variety of issues such as economic growth, governance, health, and education. Research shows that the larger the gender gap, the lower the GDP per capita of a state, and the lower the rate of national economic growth. This suggests that women's economic empowerment, utilizing the capabilities of the entire population, is a prerequisite for economic stability and growth. Acknowledging this, and considering the 19 percent labor force participation rate for Palestinian women, there is a need for significant interventions to advance women's economic empowerment and contribution to the economy.^{vi} Inequality between the sexes also has an impact on the health of communities, and the larger the gender gap, the lower the life expectancy is for both men and women. Similarly, the more gender inequality there is in a state, the higher the level of government corruption. When men and women have equal rights and opportunities, there is an increase in transparency and trust in government institutions, which suggests that gender equality is key to fighting corruption.^{vii}

Photo courtesy of UNDP

With the overwhelming evidence that gender equality and women's empowerment are preconditions for peace and development, why is progress so slow? Although both men and women, as well as societies at large, stand to gain from women's empowerment and a more inclusive and people-centered approach to peace and development, its adoption requires us to challenge the current world order and the status quo. If we are brave enough to do this, our societies are likely to become more peaceful and prosperous - the alternative is that we continue to do the same thing over and over again, expecting a different result.

Similar to other countries that are plagued by conflict yet try to safeguard human rights and build democratic institutions, the State of Palestine is

at a crossroads. Choosing the road less travelled to reach peace and development, making gender equality an integral part of its modus operandi, the State of Palestine will not only become a role model in the region, but will also safeguard a brighter future for all Palestinians.

Emmicki Roos is a gender expert who has spent the last ten years working on gender mainstreaming and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in civil society and the United Nations. Ms. Roos is a co-founder and executive director (at this time on leave) of 1325 Policy Group, a Swedish non-governmental organization. She currently serves at UNDP as a seconded gender advisor from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).



Photo courtesy of UNESCO.

ⁱ Kofi A. Annan "Foreword," in *Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace*, edited by Mcrae Rob and Hubert Don, Xix-Xx, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001, available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0nsn.5>.

ⁱⁱ Marie O'Reilly, "Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies," *Inclusive Security*, 2015, available at <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/why-women-inclusive-security-and-peaceful-societies/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Facts and Figures: Ending Violence Against Women*, UN Women, 2017, available at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015, pp. 40-42, available at [http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf).

^{vi} *Press Release: On the Occasion of 01 May International Workers Day*, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 2015, available at http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_IntWokDy2016E.pdf.

^{vii} Valerie M. Hudson and Chad Emmett, *Sex and World Peace*, Woodrow Wilson Center, 2012, available at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Hudson%20Presentation.pdf>.

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GOALLLLL!!!

PYSL Contributes to Increased Female Participation in Sports



By Nader Atta
with support from Muna Araj

Across the globe, sports are considered a means of unifying a nation under one flag. It offers the opportunity for citizens to stand united and sing their common national anthem. It is a means for men, women, and children, the young and the old, to cheer together and feel the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat. Stadiums and coliseums are full of people rooting together for their national team or favourite male and/or female athlete. An example of how sports can bridge gaps between people is the ongoing Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, where the North Korean and South Korean teams marched together under one flag – even though their countries have been divided since 1945 and in a state of war since 1950. This important step has now led the two leaders to agree to meet and talk, something that would have been unheard off just a couple of years, or even weeks ago.

With funding from the Government of Japan, UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People – in partnership with Al Quds University and the Palestinian Olympic Committee and in coordination with the Palestinian Ministry of Education – has embarked on a new innovative approach to sports in the Arab region. It aims to attract the greatest number of boys and specifically girls, starting from a young age, to participate in a variety of sports activities, based on a year-round seasonal system. This approach will introduce and promote non-traditional sports, and it hopes to inspire young people, in particular females, to participate. And PYSL encourages families to attend their children's games and/or volunteer their time.

The Palestinian Youth Sports League (PYSL) intends to become a community-based sports league that introduces a variety of sports to young male and female athletes, year-round. It is bent on fostering

The Palestinian Youth Sports League (PYSL) launched its activities in 2017. It has registered 9,000 youth, 25 percent of which are girls and young women. New teams were formed in many sports disciplines, non-traditional sports were promoted, two new sports playgrounds were built, and for the first time, track and field events were organized in the West Bank and Gaza.



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that will open doors that are currently closed for girls and young women. The PYSL is a vehicle that will contribute to fostering Palestinian participation at the highest levels in regional and international competitions.

team-building and leadership skills in our children and youth and promoting family participation and volunteerism, and it wishes to identify future role models. The PYSL will become the feeding system for our club teams and federations. It is a system that will promote social cohesion and a process

In 2017, PYSL pilot activities started in earnest after registering children and youth in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Very encouraging was the significant interest of young females who wanted to be part of the league and its various competitions. Out of about 9,000 youth that registered in total throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – including particularly



Jericho, Ein Al-Beida, Immatain, and the middle area of Gaza – 25 percent are female. For many of them, this was the first time they had kicked a soccer ball, played volleyball and handball, shot basketball hoops, competed in bike races, and ran in short and long-distance races. What was extremely unlikely yesterday, has become possible now.

During the activities and competitions that took place during the pilot project year, we were humbled to see the smiles, energy, and enthusiasm of girls and boys eager to learn and compete in the different sports activities. In Jericho, Al-Bireh, and Tulkarem, female athletes participated for the first time



in local and national bike race competitions. In Ein Al-Beida, a community located in Area C of the Tubas District, and in Immatain, beautiful new multi-purpose sports playgrounds were constructed by UNDP – funded by Sweden, Austria, and Norway through the Community Resilience Development Programme (CRDP) – and became the setting where the PYSL kicked off league activities. For many of the girls, it was the first time they were playing in anything called sports. In Gaza, six clubs formed that not only introduce new sports activities but also for the first-time formed handball and basketball teams for girls.

Also for the first time, to conclude the first season of PYSL activities, the PYSL in coordination with the Palestinian Athletic Federation organized a series of regional track and field competitions in the West Bank and Gaza. They drew hundreds of male and female youth athletes, and culminated in December 2017 with the first national championship that identified the ones who were the fastest and had the most stamina. As a result of the races, 125 new runners were identified, 20 of which are females who are practicing as new teams in clubs associated with the federation in the West Bank. Moreover,



in these races 23 new young people were chosen for participation in the national team, four of them girls and young women. One of the national team runners, who was identified through the PYSL competitions, is a 17-year-old from Gaza who received an Olympic Solidarity Scholarship to run in the 1500-meter race in the 2020 Olympics in Japan.

Thus, the transformation has begun. Being able to see Palestinian youth from Gaza and the West Bank unite for the first time, joined under the Palestinian flag in order to compete,



was an emotional moment that will not be forgotten. PYSL is contributing to social cohesion. Watching young girls in Ein Al-Beida, and hearing them

A great transformation is taking place in Palestinian society, a transformation that will contribute to a strengthened Palestinian identity and to social cohesion. A transformation that is rooted in sports.

express how much they enjoy playing sports and want to continue training, makes us more determined than ever to make PYSL a household name. Girls who ride bikes, kick soccer balls, score goals and baskets, and slam down volleyballs are part of a social transformation. PYSL is opening new opportunities to engage in, and we look forward to the day when hopefully soon, a young male and/or female athlete will bring home a medal from the Olympics. This is an ultimate goal for the State of Palestine!

Born and raised in the United States, Nader Atta is presently living in the Palestinian city of Al-Bireh. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in international relations from George Mason University and a Master of Technology from North Carolina State University. As a young adult, he was one of the founding members of ROOTS, a Palestinian-American Youth Organization based in Washington DC. Since 1995, Mr. Atta has been working with the United Nations Development Programme/ Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) in various capacities. Currently, he is deputy team leader of the governance and social development unit.

Article photos courtesy of PYSL.

LABOUR OF LOVE

New Approaches to Palestinian Embroidery

March 18 - August 25, 2018

A new exhibition by the Palestinian Museum, Birzeit

By virtue of being made by women and worn on the body, Palestinian embroidery is an intimate catalyst for the exploration of history. Woven into the social, economic, and political fabrics of their time, embroideries tell stories. Through the lenses of gender, labour, commodity, and class, *Labour of Love* traces embroidery's shift from a personal practice to a symbol of national heritage, examining the implications of embroidery's commodification and the ethics of its production by NGOs today.

Although embroidery historically has been considered marginal, dismissed as "women's work," *Labour of Love* celebrates women whose work is their strength and who wield that strength from the margins. At a time of heightened global conversation around women's rights and dominion over their bodies, the exhibition is invested in understanding embroidery's role in the construction of ideals and images of womanhood in historic and contemporary Palestine.

With a "forest" of 80 historic Palestinian dresses at its heart – displayed in conversation with posters, paintings, archival photographs, and newly-commissioned video – the exhibition seeks to build a complex picture of Palestinian material history. From the paintings of Liberation Artists to the dresses of the First Intifada and embroidery made by political prisoners, *Labour of Love* challenges assumptions around this most paradigmatic subject of Palestinian culture.

Labour of Love includes a public program of guided tours, lectures, and family events with an educational focus. A rich catalogue will launch in July.

The Palestinian Museum thanks its lenders: Palestine Heritage Museum–Dar Al-Tifl Al-Arabi, Jerusalem; Birzeit University Museum; Tiraz: Widad Kavar Home for Arab Dress, Amman, Jordan; Bank of Palestine; Maha Abu Shosheh; George M. Al-Ama; Malak Al-Husseini Abdulrahim; Inaash Al-Mukhayim Al-Filistini, Beirut; Ina'sh Al-Uhra, Ramallah; Zawyeh Gallery, Ramallah; and all those who generously shared items from their personal archives.

Rachel Dedman is an independent curator and writer, based in Beirut since 2013. She curates for museums and collections across the region and internationally. Recent projects include exhibitions for Beirut Art Center (Beirut), Dar El-Nimer (Beirut), Fotopub (Slovenia), Transart Triennial (Berlin), and apexart (New York/Beirut).

The Palestinian Museum is an independent institution dedicated to supporting an open and dynamic Palestinian culture, both nationally and internationally. The Museum is a flagship project of **Taawon** (Welfare Association).



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Women's Participation in the Reconciliation Process

Perspectives from Gaza



By Willemijn van Lelyveld
and Wafaa Al Kafarna

The adoption of landmark Resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council in 2000 represented a decisive moment and celebrated years of advocacy by women's advocates globally. It recognized, for the first time in history, the role of gender equality and women's leadership in international peace and security. Since then, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda has gained further prominence. Additional Security Council resolutions have been adopted that further elaborate on the importance of promoting gender equality and assuring women's protection and participation, as well as their rights in mediation, peacebuilding, transitional justice, and reconstruction processes.ⁱ After all, as women represent half of the world's population, it should be self-evident that their



priorities and voices are included and heard when decisions are made on how to deal with a history of atrocities and reconstruct society after years of conflict or crisis.

Unfortunately, reality on the ground paints a bleaker picture. Women continue to be excluded from formal discussions on transitional processes, and are denied the right to participate in decisions that will shape their future lives and those of their families and communities. The percentage of women in peace talks globally has continued to be low,ⁱⁱ with national dialogues and decisions in conflict-affected countries frequently dominated by a small group of male politicians.ⁱⁱⁱ And this even though a growing body of evidence suggests that the involvement of women in peace, security, and transition processes makes it more likely that justice, reconciliation, and accountability are addressed – which therefore makes peace deals more sustainable.^{iv}

The Palestinian context is no different. Women in Gaza have been largely excluded from formal dialogue efforts to end the Palestinian political division. Their voices and concerns have neither been heard nor included in the various reconciliation talks held and agreements reached since 2005. A simple analysis of the number of men and women representatives – which does not necessarily equate meaningful representation – shows that only a few women participated in official meetings held between the political parties in Cairo in 2011. Not a single woman participated in the talks leading up to the signature of the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas' political leadership in October 2017. As a result, no women are represented in the technical committees that were established afterwards in order to flesh out the details of the reconciliation arrangements that will directly impact their lives and society.



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Women constitute half of society, yet they have largely been excluded from participation in the official efforts at reaching reconciliation in the State of Palestine.

Reasons for the absence of women in these processes are multiple. A combination of political, geographical, and social factors impedes the ability of Palestinian women to engage in political activism. Harmful gender stereotypes^v that prescribe the role of women in society are a central feature in the State of Palestine, thus limiting women's equal access to resources, decision-making power, and knowledge. In addition, the ongoing occupation significantly impacts women's effective participation in transitional justice and peace processes. Access challenges due to the blockade of the Gaza Strip have hampered the ability of women activists from Gaza to develop

a unified voice with their colleagues from the West Bank. Since June 2007, women activists in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have resorted to various, often expensive, means to maintain contact and organize themselves, such as through video-conferencing or via meetings held out of the country – if they are granted exit permits by Israel. Such logistical challenges have debilitated activists' ability to meaningfully participate and represent Palestinian women at the national level. Indeed, a 2015 study stated that 72.9 percent of interviewees agreed that checkpoints and the separation policies practiced by the occupation have (significantly) decreased interaction among the feminist movement in the State of Palestine.^{vi}

This is by no means due to a lack of capacity: within the extremely limited space they have been granted by the occupation and Palestinian political patriarchy, Palestinian women are well organized and have received recognition as peace activists in international fora, speaking strongly and courageously on their political insights and vision.^{vii} At home, women have been actively engaged in various informal efforts to end the division and advance Palestinian unity. They have claimed their space through initiatives away from the spotlights of the press, by organizing roundtable discussions, presenting research papers, and developing joint positions to advance what was missing in formal agreements signed by politicians, thus reflecting their priorities. A good example of a women's initiative in Gaza was the joint peaceful strike that was organized for two years (2012–2014) on a weekly basis by the General Union of Palestinian Women in Gaza, women's centers, and political representatives with the aim to end the divide. The gatherings – which also saw the participation of men –

were held in front of the building of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The organization of these strikes was far from easy, given that the de-facto authorities in Gaza were opposed to public gatherings. Some women were detained due to their participation in these activities. Activities were concluded when in September 2014 Hamas and Fatah leaders signed a reconciliation agreement in Cairo.

Recently, the member of the Fatah Central Committee who is in charge of the reconciliation file reaffirmed his full support for women's participation in the reconciliation process, promising to include women in all of the reconciliation committees.^{viii} This is an important and positive development towards ensuring that women are part of the formal decision-making processes. However, no further concrete actions have been taken as of yet to make good on this promise.

The Sawasya Programme represents the joint work of three members of the UN family – UN Women, UNICEF and UNDP – in support of strengthening the rule of law in the State of Palestine. Making sure that women and children can fully access their rights and are protected under the law are central features of our programme. We work with our partners in different ways to accomplish this, making sure that justice and security services respond to the specific needs of women and children, any barriers to access these services are lifted, children and women are fully aware of and claim their rights, and policy and legislative frameworks are in line with international human rights standards. Key part of this objective is to support efforts that work towards a unified justice sector and a legal framework in order to provide equal justice to men, women, and children across the Palestinian state. In this context, questions related to transitional justice will need to be answered: What does reconciliation



Photo by Basel Maqousy.

mean in the Palestinian context for those that have been most affected? How do we deal with the past period of division and its consequences for the population of Gaza? And how do we move on from here, what reforms must be implemented to ensure that this does not happen again?

The signature of the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas provides a critical window of opportunity. It allows for the integration of a gender perspective and for women to have a say in what reconciliation means to them, making them part of both the design and the implementation of transitional-justice measures. Such involvement is crucial, because it is impossible to develop protection and accountability measures that respond to women's concerns and priorities without their full participation at all levels. Indeed, from recent discussions held with women's organizations in Gaza, it has become apparent that advocacy efforts by women's organizations have thus far centered around two key demands: an end to the political division and a space to participate in the political decision-making processes. Therefore, they

Between 2012 and 2014, the General Union of Palestinian Women in Gaza, together with women's centers and political representatives, organized weekly strikes that demanded an end to the political divide between Gaza and the West Bank.

call upon the Palestinian government to put in place measures to guarantee the representation of women and their priorities in the various committees created under the Cairo Agreement. This should be matched by giving increased support to efforts that aim at increasing women's participation in decision-making bodies, and by implementing legislative reform that advances women's participation in the political process. In addition,

harmful gender stereotypes that impede political participation must be continuously challenged through legal and economic empowerment efforts, advocacy, and the raising of awareness. And finally, support must be given to national representative bodies, networks, and platforms that ensure systematic dialogue between civil society representatives in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Including young women in this process is crucial, and can be accomplished by working with schools and universities in order to build a new generation of political leadership.

To overcome a legacy of division and political unrest, reconciliation will need to be an inclusive process that restores social cohesion. If seized, this presents a critical opportunity to break with past practices and open up new spaces and possibilities for women's political participation. It requires determined efforts by all segments of society, the government, civil society, and the international community, so we can build a sustainable and peaceful future.

Ms. Willemijn van Lelyveld, a Dutch National, is Programme Management

Specialist at UNDP/PAPP. Currently working with the UNDP/UN Women/ UNICEF Sawasya Programme, she is in charge of managing its portfolio's components related to human rights, legal aid, gender, and juvenile justice. Ms. van Lelyveld has extensive experience working on gender-responsive peacebuilding and rule of law in different country settings, including in Palestine, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and at the UN Headquarters in New York.

Ms. Wafaa Al Kafarna resides in Gaza, where she is a project management analyst at UNDP/PAPP. Currently working with the UNDP/UN Women/ UNICEF Sawasya Programme, she is responsible for the management, implementation, and delivery of the key components of the program portfolio in Gaza that are related to the civil-society contributions to the rule of law and to community access to justice. Ms. Kafarna has extensive experience in working on the protection of women's rights and the promotion of gender equality in Gaza.

ⁱ UNSCR 1820 (2008) and UNSCR 1888 (2009) on

conflict-related sexual violence, UNSCR 1889 (2009) on obstacles to women's political participation, UNSCR 1960 (2010) on sexual violence in conflict, and UNSCR 2016 and 2122 (2013) on implementation of previous resolutions.

ⁱⁱ *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015, available at [http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections Between Presence and Influence*, UN Women, 2012, available at <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2012/10/wpssourcebook-03a-womenpeace negotiations-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1159>.

^{iv} *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Role in Peace Processes*, International Peace Institute, 2015, available at <http://www.inclusivepeace.org/sites/default/files/IPI-Reimagining-Peacemaking.pdf>.

^v Gender stereotyping refers to the practice of ascribing to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men. Gender stereotyping is wrongful when it results in a violation or violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. An example of this, is the failure to criminalize marital rape based on the societal perception of women as the sexual property of men. (See also the official definition issued by the UN at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/GenderStereotypes.aspx>).

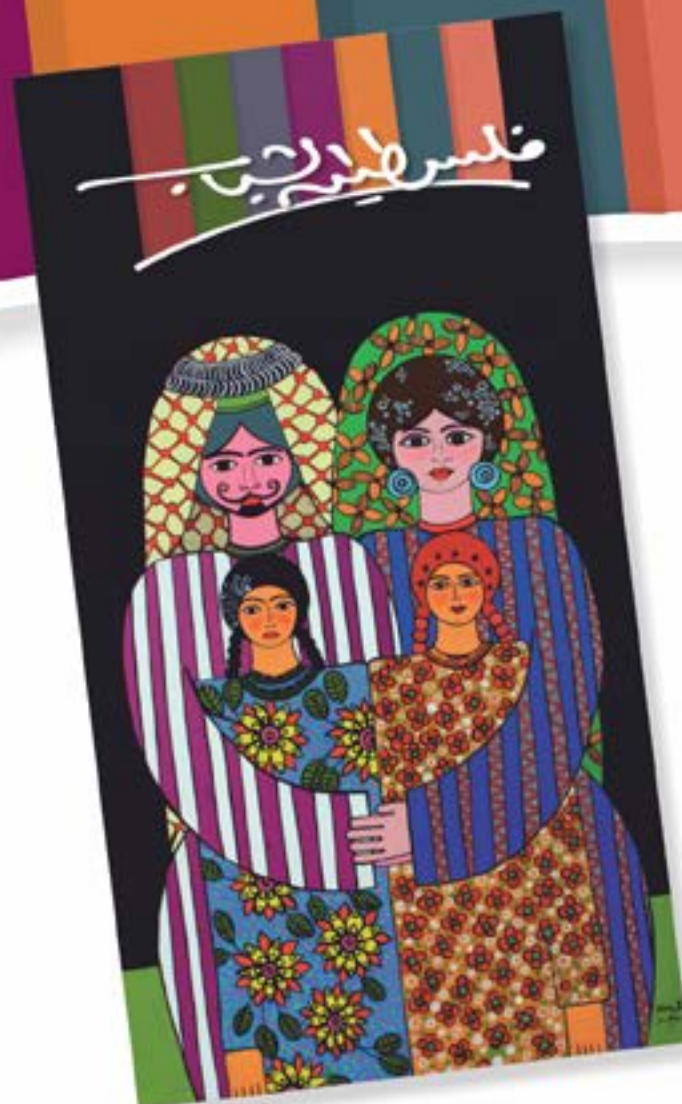
^{vi} *The Status of Political Participation among Palestinian Women Under UNSCR 1325 (in Arabic)*, Women's Affairs Technical Committee, 2015. The research sample consisted of 3,255 persons from the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, aged between 17 and 76 years old.

^{vii} Vanessa Farr, "UNSCR 1325 and Women's Peace Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2011, available via <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14616742.2011.611661>.

^{viii} See "Annual Report 2016," The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), October 7, 2017, available at <http://www.miftah.org/Mact/MiftahActivityReport2016En.pdf>.

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“Ahu Rajil, wa As-Salam”ⁱ

Where Are the Men Who Advocate Gender Equality in the Arab Region?



By Geoff Prewitt

Women stood side by side with men in demanding liberty and dignity during the events of 2011 in the Arab region. Their role in the struggle was widely hailed, to the extent that one such activist, Tawakkol Karman of Yemen, won the Noble Peace Prize together with two others. In 2014, another Nobel Prize was awarded to a young woman who challenged patriarchy, transcended Pakistan and the Muslim world, and promoted the rights of education for young women. Her name is Malala Yousafzai.

But, many reforms advantageous to women and communities in the region, such as those of family law,ⁱⁱ have stalled or even rolled back in the past seven years, mainly due to conflict and patriarchal norms. Gender inequality, on average, is the most pronounced of any world region in the Arab states, as measured by indicators on women’s political participation, economic empowerment, and access to justice, as well as rates of sexual and other forms of violence towards women and girls. In nearly all human development indices, apart from life expectancy and some areas of education, men outpace women. Yet, women comprise 50 percent of the population, don’t they deserve better? And why aren’t Arab men doing more to promote gender equality?

The State of Palestine, similar to many countries, has a gender inequality problem. The symptoms – be it high unemployment rates among women or the prevalence of violence, both of which further reinforce unequal power dynamics – are strongly exacerbated by

Challenges are specific to each country in the MENA region, and it is certainly worth noting that gender inequality and misogyny are endemic globally. As one writer put it, “culturally engrained sexism is not particular to Arab societies... it’s a problem that Arab societies have, but it’s not a distinctively Arab problem.”ⁱⁱⁱ

the oppressive policies and conditions of the occupation. Yet, born out of the struggle for independence and identity, a greater focus on basic rights for all begets hope. The State of Palestine recently formulated a national strategy



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

to fight violence against women, engaging the participation of survivors of violence. However, due to the inability of the Palestinian Legislative Council to convene, no laws have been passed. Although there is a strong recognition among men and women that gender equality has not been achieved in the Palestinian state, approximately three-quarters of men and nearly 87 percent of women agree with the statement, “We as Palestinians need to do more work to promote the equality of women and men.”^{iv}





Photo courtesy of UNESCO.

Fortunately, the need to close the gender gap has been recognized. Key recommendations include:

- The need to document cases of innovative initiatives that focus on working with men and boys to promote gender equality and positive and non-violent masculinities. This will include identification of their successful and/or replicable characteristics, the main obstacles that were overcome, and their relevance for policy and practice development in the State of Palestine.
- Place more focus on education and upbringing, particularly on the family, in the creation of role models and early childhood experiences. For example, families that encourage daughters to be more independent and to take on non-traditional professions contribute to increased future options for young women. In short, men's privileges are taught through culture, society, and family. In turn, values that promote equal rights can translate into, and are reinforced by, legislation and institutions. The importance of having open discussions around gender norms and stereotypes is the first step in addressing the issue.

- Men need to be held accountable for the suppressive actions and behaviors they commit, including violence against women and girls. Men's responsibility is necessary for justice and to enable the healing of individuals and society. Legislative change and the effective implementation of laws, at all levels, are needed to promote and protect women's rights, including in the family.
- There are many global coalitions and non-governmental organizations focused on men's responsibility in strengthening gender equality. Groups such as White Ribbon or MenEngage Alliance are creating networks that aim to impel men to fulfil their obligation as advocates for change. The State of Palestine needs such organizations. Moreover, safe, comfortable, and at times separate spaces are needed for both men and women to discuss the political, personal, and organizational dimensions of gender equality.
- It is important to address structural causes of inequality at the level of policy, legislation, and procedures, including employment opportunities. For example, the introduction of

quotas in electoral procedures can lead to more women leaders. But if the absence of women from positions of political authority persists, it is more likely that the State of Palestine will continue to promote men's interests over those of women. The enabling factors for continued engagement, however, need to be further addressed and improved. The change that is needed goes beyond changing legislation or increasing participation - the mind sets of men must be changed.

Gender equality, be it in the State of Palestine, the Arab Region, or the world, is not a "women's issue" but rather an integral component of a comprehensive human rights and development agenda that must be adhered to by both men and women. More men need to step up and accept feminism, the belief in and organized advocacy for the notion that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. Feminism should not be stigmatized for men, but must be championed. Moreover, men need to realize that the dominance of one group over another leads to a less productive, less healthy, less educated, less progressive, and less content society. Just as all Palestinians suffer under the occupation, men, too, suffer from a lack of gender equality and pervasive gender roles, hindering them from reaching their full potential.

Young women in Arab countries, including the State of Palestine, are hardly passive victims, and many are challenging and transforming systems of power and exclusion. Still, more men need to get engaged as equal partners in the struggle for equality.

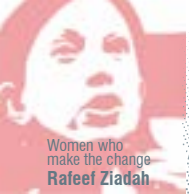
Geoffrey D. Prewitt, is UNDP's Deputy Special Representative in the occupied Palestinian territory. Mr. Prewitt has accrued extensive professional experience in the UN system and beyond. Previous posts include chief of the development programming section of the UN Volunteers (UNV) in Bonn, Germany, and deputy head of the UNDP Regional Center in Cairo, as well as civil society/governance advisor in the New York Headquarters and in Central and Eastern Africa, including the oPt. Before joining UNDP, Mr. Prewitt worked with civil society organizations (CSOs) in Malawi and Hungary. He holds an MA in international development from Cornell University and a BA in history from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. You can follow him on twitter @gprewitt1.

ⁱ Can be roughly translated (from an Egyptian Arabic dialect) to "He is a man, and that settles it."

ⁱⁱ For Palestine, see Nahda Shehada, *Debating Islamic Family Law in Palestine: Citizenship, Gender, and 'Islamic' Idioms*, available at file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/Metis_174383.pdf; and Penny Johnson & Rema Hammami, *Change and Conservation Family Law Reform in Court Practice and Public Perceptions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Summary and Report of 2013 Family Law Survey Findings*, Institute of Women's Studies, Birzeit University in collaboration with Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) and with support from UNDP, December 2013, available at http://iws.birzeit.edu/sites/default/files/2016-12/Family%20Law%20Survey%20FINAL%20WEB_Penny%20and%20Rema_0.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ Max Fisher, "The Real Roots of Sexism in the Middle East (It's not Islam, Race, or 'Hate').", *The Atlantic*, April 12, 20, available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/04/the-real-roots-of-sexism-in-the-middle-east-its-not-islam-race-or-hate/256362/>.

^{iv} *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IAMGES) - Middle East and North Africa (MENA)*, UN Women and Promundo, 2017, available at <https://imagesmena.org/en/>.



Gender Equality Paves the Road Towards Sustainable Development



By Inas Margieh

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were designed as tools to support the effective implementation of the commitments that world leaders announced in September 2015. The SDGs comprise 17 goals and 169 targets for improved living conditions that are to be achieved globally by the year 2030. Also referred to as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this framework aims to end poverty worldwide, combat inequalities, build peaceful and just societies, create conditions for sustainable and inclusive economic growth, protect human rights, promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and ensure the protection of the planet and its natural resources.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a top priority also for Palestine's government. The Palestinian Authority has not only voluntarily launched its own *2030 Agenda for Gender Equality*, but has also aligned its *National Policy Agenda 2017-2022* and all sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies, including the gender strategy, with the SDGs.

Two-and-a-half years into the implementation of the SDGs, UN Women is closely supporting the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs in enhancing national commitments to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. To this end, it is working with all stakeholders to tackle and address the existing structural inequalities that constitute barriers to gender equality and women's rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, working in partnership with the UN country team (UNCT), the prime minister's office, and civil

society actors. Recently, a national working group was established with support from UN Women to support the implementation of SDG 5 that outlines the pledge that countries "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" and mainstream gender across all other 16 SDGs. UN Women is committed to continue its support of national stakeholders in their efforts to localize and implement the 2030 Agenda – in alignment with the strategic objectives of the PA's *Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy for the OPT* and its sector strategies.

A top priority of UN Women is strengthening the national ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals in Palestine, while fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships to ensure the implementation of gender-responsive policies.



As all 17 SDGs impact the lives of women and girls, the aims to achieve the sustainable development goals in the OPT by 2030 require that great efforts are extended towards closing the gender gap across all development goals. Achieving gender equality, as embedded in Goal 5, will not be possible without addressing the inequalities in the other SDGs. Thus, by working in complementarity, is necessary to address the high interchangeability and interdependence between these goals.

A good example in this regard is education. Because it has a long-lasting effect on the socialization of children and youth, it also exerts a major impact on the existing social norms and beliefs that currently are discriminatory against women and girls. These norms can be challenged or maintained. However, Goal 5 on gender equality cannot be achieved without addressing the gender stereotypes in educational textbooks and teachers' own beliefs, as well as other inequalities in the educational



Graduation ceremony at Birzeit University.

processes as a whole. Simultaneously – and as embedded in SDG 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth – the employability and future employment of young women and girls cannot be enhanced, and their ability to join the labor force cannot be promoted unless we enhance the gender sensitivity and responsiveness of the technical- and vocational education and training programs (TVET) that are provided by different service providers, including the government.

Besides structural and social barriers, the lacking alignment of national legal frameworks with international laws and Palestinian national commitments must be addressed. Women and girls' equitable access to quality services and opportunities must be assured, and their full participation in decision making in political and economic processes has to be secured. This requires that we continuously demand increased responsiveness of the duty bearers who must turn gender-equality commitments into actions at the national level.

A significant challenge facing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda is the occupation,

which affects all aspects of the lives of all Palestinian women, men, boys, and girls, and limits the possibility of making a lasting change in the West Bank and Gaza. The ongoing blockade is causing continuous and dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian conditions in Gaza and raising alarm bells in the international humanitarian community – and yet there is no solution in sight. Implementation of the agenda simply entails and requires significant and coordinated efforts to enhance the human rights situation of Palestinians, and national stakeholders and communities must be empowered to be able to tackle intrinsic inequalities in the Palestinian society.

Ms. Inas Margieh, currently the UN Women Programme Coordinator, holds a master's degree in education and human development from the

Amidst the dire prospects for reaching a political solution, the implementation of strategies to localize the SDGs will require significant coordinated efforts to enhance the human rights situation of Palestinians.

University of Haifa, a certificate of specialization in early childhood development, and a bachelor's degree in education and English language and literature from the University of Haifa. Inas has over 16 years of professional experience in key humanitarian and development domains, including education, protection, leadership and participation, human rights, and women's right and gender equality.



ⁱ Ministry of Women's Affairs, *Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy: Promoting Gender Equality and Equity 2011-2013*, Palestinian National Authority, available at http://www.lacs.ps/documentsShow.aspx?ATT_ID=4052.



Because I Am a Man

The Day Palestinian Men Stood Up for Gender Equality



By Eunjin Jeong

When at the launching of the Because I Am a Man campaign on February 19, 2018, in Al-Bireh, Palestine, a singer, a journalist, and two fathers from Palestine and Sweden came onto the stage to share their stories of how they contribute to empowering women at home and in the workplace, the audience held their breath. They did not want to miss a word from these male champions who have been pursuing paths and lives “less travelled” – at least in Palestine.

“Sharing caregiving roles at home is a must, not a choice,” said Said Mekahal, a Swedish man with a Palestinian background. Relating the experiences he had made when taking up a paternity leave in Sweden to take care of his family, he explained, “I started to understand my wife and my mother the first day I took care of my children at home.”

To Ehab Al-Jariri, the co-founder and chief editor of the radio station 24 FM – who has successfully advocated for the employment of more female journalists – hiring more women at workplaces is not only good for his company but also for the entire society. “Women are capable of everything men do, and should be given the same opportunity at work for the benefit of everyone,” he argued, emphasizing the social responsibility of employers to hire more women.

66 percent of the men surveyed in Palestine responded by asserting that they would like to have the option of paternal leave. Furthermore, 63 percent of the surveyed men agreed or strongly agreed that a woman with the same qualifications can do as good a job as a man.



A participant who signed the HeForShe commitment at the launching of the Palestine Report of IMAGES MENA.

Understanding Masculinities: International Men and Gender Equality Survey in the Middle East and North Africa (IMAGES MENA) is the first study of its kind and size in the region, and examines men's attitudes toward gender equality in four Arab countries, namely Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon.

“Through the results of the Palestine report of the *IMAGES MENA* that is launched today, we found out that the majority of the surveyed men and women agreed that Palestinians need to extend more efforts to promote equality between women and men,” said Hadeel Abdo, project coordinator of the Men and Women for Gender Equality program at UN Women’s Palestine Office, who led the launching event. “Nonetheless, the fact that less than 20 percent of men and women believe that men’s involvement in caregiving roles or other domestic chores is shameful is a hopeful sign, and can be considered a starting point on the road to achieving gender equality in Palestine by engaging both men and women,” she continued.

On the day of the event, eight large “Because I am man” billboard messages were put up in the major West Bank cities, featuring images of men who are advocating for gender equality in their daily lives. The Because I Am a Man campaign (#لأني_رجل) is in fact a regional campaign, currently rolled up in Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco. It aims to change negative stereotypes associated with gender roles that reflect on perceptions and impact realities related to household-roles and responsibilities, fatherhood, violence against women, employment, and other topics.

“Because I Am a Man seeks not to remove the important voices of women, but rather to create a wider space for engaging in a dialogue around gender



One of the billboard messages that were put up throughout West Bank as part of the Because I Am a Man campaign.



Preparing for the photo exhibition *Palestinian Fathers* was an enlightening experience for the Palestinian photographer Zaki Qutteineh.

norms – and ultimately elevate us to a more equal society, wherein women and men, boys and girls have the same opportunities and responsibilities inside and outside the home,” said Mohammad Naciri, the regional director for Arab states at UN Women. He acknowledges that the evidence-based findings of *IMAGES MENA* confirmed the engrained social norms in the four Arab States surveyed.

To celebrate the launching of the *Because I am a Man* campaign, Bashar Murad, a young Palestinian singer, performed his new song by the same title (translation from Arabic).

I'm a Man, I respect her, I learn how to be powerful from her power

I'm a Man, I listen to her and she listens to me, I don't try to change her

We are equal

Besides, a short-animated film was screened on the evolving roles of members of an ordinary Palestinian family, seen from the perspective of a ten-year-old boy.

Furthermore, the global campaign titled *HeForShe*, a solidarity movement initiated by UN Women, was launched

for the first time in Palestine at this event. *HeForShe* aims to engage men and boys as equal partners of women and girls. Participants lined up to sign up for the *HeForShe* commitment, and took photos with a photo frame that features a self-drafted message of support. Since its launching in September 2014 at the United



The young Palestinian singer Bashar Murad sings a song titled “*Because I am a man.*”



Male champions from Palestine speak at the launching of the *Because I Am a Man* campaign.

Nations by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UN Women Global Goodwill Ambassador, Emma Watson, hundreds of thousands of men from around the world have committed to gender equality worldwide, including heads of state, CEOs, and global luminaries from all walks of life.

Finally, two parallel photo exhibitions were staged at the event by UN Women in collaboration with the Consulate General of Sweden in Jerusalem, presenting images of Palestinian and Swedish fathers who are promoting gender equality through their actions in the home. The exhibitions aimed to highlight that entire families benefit when fathers are involved in every aspect of family life.

“The time that I spent with the participating fathers and their families was truly enlightening and heartwarming, to say the least. I genuinely felt strong bonds in all families, and I could imagine how huge the impact is that the father champions and their will have on future generations. These children will view their own parenthood differently,”

said Zaki Qutteineh, the Palestinian photographer who prepared the photo exhibition *Palestinian Fathers*.

“We all agreed, however, that even though the road ahead looks promising, we still have a long and difficult way to go until we see more father champions in our community,” he continued, looking at photos of fathers who he called true champions.

Eunjin Jeong is the advocacy and communications officer at UN Women Palestine Office. She enjoys cycling around Jerusalem, taking photos of people on the street, and discovering new travel destinations.

Article photos courtesy of UN Women/Eunjin Jeong.



*The launching of the *IMAGES* report and the *Because I Am a Man* and *HeForShe* campaigns, as well as the fatherhood photo exhibition that was organized by UN Women's Palestine Office on February 19, 2018, were generously funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Samia Bamieh



My mother frequently challenged my fascination for individual heroes, emphasizing that movements and institutions shape the course of history, whereas heroes are merely an inspiration for or embodiment of such movements, never their substitute. She dedicated her life to building such movements and institutions. The fact many readers may not have heard of her is merely testimony to the fact that she has always focused more on her responsibilities than on the credit she might receive for her actions.

Samia found inspiring role models in her own family. Her mother was a descendant of Emir Abdelkader of Algeria, who fought against French colonialism for 18 years before he was imprisoned and exiled. The Emir continued to defend his ideals of freedom and humanism in exile, and in Damascus he used his influence to save the lives of thousands of Christians. Samia's father was a successful businessman who placed his resources and efforts at the service of the Arab Palestinian revolt.

Born a Palestine refugee in Lebanon, Samia discovered Palestine while visiting her father in Gaza and their hometown Yaffa, increasingly comprehending the dispossession her nation endures, living under foreign military-colonial domination. Samia had become increasingly eager to join the Palestinian struggle when she met and married Saeb. They had two children, Rana and me, Majed, and she became a mother the way she was an activist: with all her soul and heart, with responsibility and self-sacrifice. In Beirut, Samia shaped her identity. Then came what she calls her personal Nakba, the 1982 Israeli war in Lebanon. Many more exiles followed, and her choices were dictated by being Palestinian, by marriage, motherhood, and struggle. All her life, Samia had fought hard for her independence – but she was ready to relinquish it in her strive for women's rights, the freedom of her people, and the well-being of her family.

Becoming one of the most intransigent and respected advocates of women's rights in Palestine, Samia held the movement's highest positions. She was chairwoman of the Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC, a coalition of women's movements within Palestinian factions); an elected member in the leadership of the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW); founder and president of the GUPW branch in the United

Arab Emirates; chairperson of the Palestinian steering committee of the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace (IWC); and a key actor in the establishment of the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs. And yet, she is most proud of her role as a community organizer among the women of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon, where she worked before the massacre. She frequently weeps whenever these names are mentioned.

Samia also held prominent positions at the national and international levels, serving as ambassador, head of the UN and Europe departments at the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and member of the first committee mandated with the drafting of the Palestinian constitution. She defended the Palestinian cause and mobilized internationally against the occupation and for Palestinian rights, always refusing diktats and empty dialogue not based on shared values and joint struggle.

For Samia, there can be no separation between the fight for women's rights and national rights, freedom is non-negotiable, diversity is God's design and an essential part of Palestine's identity, and pluralism is synonym to shared dignity and democracy. She defends ideals, not ideologies, and plays tough to defend her principles, sometimes at the expense of her true nature and sensitivity. Her detailed-oriented mind and sharp, uncompromising analysis have allowed Samia to create a unique vision and articulate positions with courage and clarity. Her frankness, even bluntness, and passion, even anger, stem from a permanent rebellion against injustice. She not only speaks truth to power, she acts accordingly. Thus, she resisted when donors demanded from WATC to renege on

figures of the Palestinian revolution, when the town Burqa decided to name after Dalal Moghrabi a center that WATC had helped establish. She was disappointed to see her European partners fall into the Israeli trap that aims to divert attention away from its own crimes by calling on Palestinians to denounce their icons from a different era of the struggle – something no liberation movement or nation can comply with, and something Israel was never required to do. Samia felt compelled to remind these partners that despite a common commitment to shared values and international law, Europeans refuse to impose sanctions on Israel for its crimes, while they sanction Palestinian organizations over the historical narratives they revere despite these organizations' outstanding record in defending human rights.

My mom spent the last two months in intensive care, fighting for life. Whereas she has always been vocal in the struggle for others, she remained silent about her own pain. In Palestine and internationally, her values are under attack, and I sensed that she wanted to get back onto her feet and fight. She asserted that even warriors have the right to rest, but resting is something she has never done. She told me in a whisper, "My story is part of a greater story of women's movements across history, of the liberation movement of Palestine and as such of the greater history of resisting oppression everywhere. I am one of the proud heirs of these struggles, and I hope we have transmitted these values and the determination to defend them to ensure that freedom and justice – and consequently peace – shall triumph in Palestine and all over the globe." Many of us are trying, to the extent possible, to walk in her giant footsteps. And we call upon her to continue leading the way from heaven.

Muna Taneeb

Muna Taneeb is a 54-year-old Palestinian farmer from Irtah Village, south of Tulkarem in the West Bank. Intent on securing her own subsistence, she is the owner of *Hakouritna* (our own courtyard) and the mother of four boys and one girl.

Muna began farming 35 years ago, taking on the toil and hard work of tending to her family's land after her husband was arrested in the 1980s. She recalls that she had no idea how to deal with the planted crops. "I was doing my best to learn agriculture. I worked alone when my husband was detained, and I was able to harvest the crops at a time when our land was used by the occupation army for training." Since then, Muna has never given up.

Throughout the years, Muna has been subjected to harassment by the occupation forces and exposed to continuous attacks and repressive practices, such as the bulldozing of her land and the destruction of infrastructure and irrigation systems. In the 1980s, an industrial zone that was established alongside her family's property began to spread poison in the attempt to expel her family from their land. Muna persisted and is still resisting. She has not given in to continuous threats to confiscate the ten dunums of her land that is surrounded by the apartheid annexation wall and lies next to the Israeli chemical factory Jishuri; she insists on protecting her property and staying put! During the second Intifada, Israeli forces forced the farm to close for more than 14 months, designating the area a closed



military zone and preventing Muna from gaining access to it. Frequent incursions and the destruction of trees and agricultural crops have been common occurrences.

In addition to her physical work, Muna is heavily engaged in humanitarian work and has a vision for further development. Today Muna oversees several projects that include fish farming, biogas production, a solar-dryer project to dry fruits and vegetables, integrated agriculture practices, bee and horticulture projects, and organic agriculture. The farm owns greenhouses, cultivates vegetables in open fields, and grows thyme. Furthermore, Muna is head of a women's society in her village that aims to empower women and enable them to achieve their goals.

Her husband Fayez considers her a partner and a key element in transforming the farm into an organic farm that operates free of chemicals. With all the many vital and rare projects that Muna has implemented, their land has become a home for international volunteers, students and their parents who wish to learn about agriculture, and specialists from all over the world.



Call for submissions

Are you a Palestinian artist looking to sell your artwork on a global platform?

Submit your portfolio and a brief artist statement to info@nasij.com

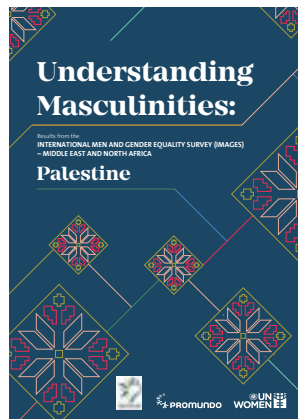
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Understanding Masculinities

Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) - Palestine

**By Promundo and
UN Women Regional Programme:
Men and Women for Gender Equality**



*In coordination with the Institute of Women's Studies, Birzeit University
Funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
Available free of charge at www.imagesmena.org*

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in the MENA region has been designed and conducted to help fill the knowledge gap in research on men's attitudes and practices in terms of their partner relationships and their perspectives on gender equality. IMAGES–Palestine is an integral part of the IMAGES MENA study that was conducted in coordination with a local partner – the Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University. Its wealth of quantitative and qualitative findings complements a growing body of research on men and masculinities in Palestine.

The IMAGES-Palestine survey consists of a sample of 2,399 respondents (1,200 men and 1,199 women) from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, representing urban, rural, and refugee camp residents. The age group interviewed was between 18 and 59 years old. The study examines men's – and women's – attitudes and practices related to a range of key issues, including support for gender equality, support for women's rights policies, household decision-making, use of various forms of gender-based violence (GBV), men's participation in caregiving and domestic chores, gendered health vulnerabilities, employment-related stress, physical security and adverse life conditions, and childhood, among others.

The findings of IMAGES-Palestine show that there are many signs of more equitable views among men and women on their roles in the household. For instance, some three-quarters of women and half of men agree that a married woman should have the same right as her husband to work outside the home. Most respondents of both genders reject the idea that it is more important to educate boys than girls when resources are scarce, as one among other signs of equitable views in Palestine. In practice, there are also many men who participate in commonly feminine household work, as well as sharing decision-making authority with women. Fewer than 20 percent of men and women think that it is shameful for men to engage in caring for children or other domestic work.

The research findings indicate that there is strong agreement among men and women that gender equality has not been achieved in Palestine. The study recommends that progressive Palestinian men who hold positive gender attitudes – including faith-based and community leaders – be encouraged to join the gender justice struggle in Palestine. This also emphasizes the importance of encouraging fathers to engage in child-rearing and caregiving roles as effective ways of changing behaviors of sons and daughters. The study also recommends working with media to promote positive models of masculinities in Palestine and empowering youth as agents of change.

Pour l'amour de Bethléem: Ma ville emmurée

For the Sake of Bethlehem:
My enwalled city

By Vera Baboun

Bayard Publishing

Number of pages: 255, cost: USD 15.9 Euros



"From suffering, learn to bring forth grace"

Vera Ghattas Baboun was the first Palestinian woman to become mayor of Bethlehem in 2012. She holds a Master's Degree in African-American literature, but this is not her greatest merit or reason for praise. It is quite another thing that invites the admiration of this Palestinian Christian woman who does not give up. In her book *Pour l'amour de Bethléem: Ma ville emmurée*, Vera Baboun opens the doors to the "walled-off life" of the Palestinians in Bethlehem. She opens this closed place without having the keys – but yet she offers us a path of freedom, of veracity without compromise.

Vera Baboun saw her life turned upside down in 1980, when her husband was arrested by the Israelis and then killed. She subsequently made it a rule of her life to take new paths and to meet three challenges: to fight for her country, for her city, and for women. Her heroine – about whom she learned in the stories her grandfather had told her – is Shéhérazade, who accomplished her destiny through courage, education and wisdom. She wants to bring this fight to all the women of the world. Like the princess of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Vera Baboun uses storytelling in her relationships, because words carry three values: wisdom, authority, and compassion. Thus, Vera seeks in each woman the traces of princess Sheherazade, so that each one may be able to defend her Arab woman culture and her values in a world of men.

The promotion of women and of widespread education, mainly in the poorest areas, as well as the struggle for citizenship for all confessions and minorities, are all ways to freedom, liberation, justice, and peace for those who share the same land in the Middle East. Vera Baboun knows that the walls that enclose her city risk locking up the inhabitants in themselves, turning them into exiles from within. The more we are locked up, the more we radicalize. Vera wants to break those walls. In her confinement, she manages to address the whole of humanity.

"Will the world be able to live in peace as long as the city of peace is immured?"

Vera Baboun delivers a powerful testimony to the reality of daily life in Bethlehem and Palestine. *For the Sake of Bethlehem: My enwalled city* is a remarkable book, and beyond that an incredible encounter with an admirable woman who is a role model for the younger generations.

On May 2017, Vera Baboun received Le Prix littéraire de l'Œuvre d'Orient for her book in a celebration that took place in the Church De Notre Dame in Paris.

Father Frederic Fagot

Manal Mahamid



Manal Mahamid was born in 1976 and spent her childhood in the predominantly-Palestinian town Umm Al-Fahem that has been annexed to Israel and now lies in economic ruin. She holds a degree in museology and curating from Tel Aviv University and obtained a Master of Fine Arts degree

from the University of Haifa in 2006. Manal has exhibited her multi-media works that focus on Palestinian existence and identity both locally and internationally; since 1996, she has held numerous solo exhibitions and participated in over 60 group exhibitions, including exhibitions in New York, Toronto, Stockholm, Düsseldorf, and London. Moreover, Manal has been granted a number of awards: She won in 2002 the A M Qattan Foundation's Young Artist of the Year Award and the America-Israel Cultural Foundation Scholarship, in 2006 the Haifa University Scholarship of Excellence, and in 2007 the Riwaq Biennale Resident Artist Award of London's Delfina Foundation. Furthermore, Manal has participated in art residencies that include the Townhouse Gallery in Cairo, Egypt (2004), and Peace of Art, Düsseldorf, Germany (2006).

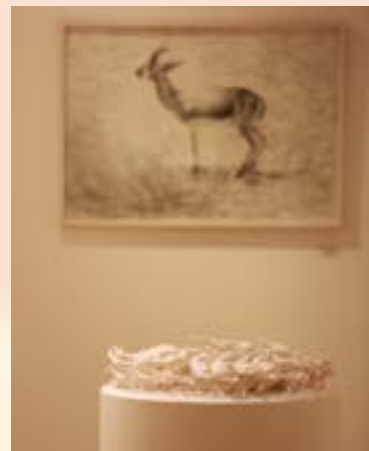


Manal's work focuses on everyday aspects, playing with elements such as time, place, and historical implications. Her creative processes search for truth; employing research, she assesses and questions historical accounts and examines the linear understanding of time. Seeking to mend the cracks in a society that is fragmented by oppression and a loss of identity, she explores the relationship between nostalgia and the current reality that is burdened with poverty and frustration.

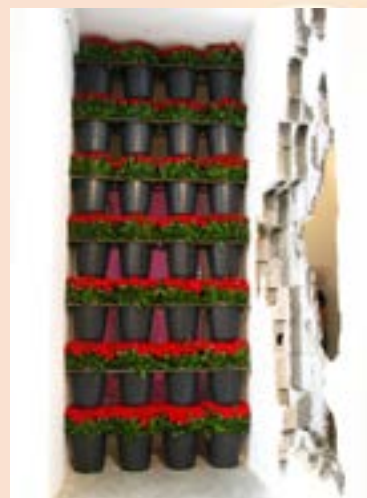
Skilled in a number of artistic mediums, Manal has experimented with painting, sculpture, photography, video installations, and mixed media. The underlying thread is her main, substantial concern – the preservation of Palestine. "The Gazelle Project,"



for example, was conceived during a family trip to the zoo, where the Palestinian gazelle was introduced as an Israeli gazelle. Manal spent two years researching Palestinian nature, and used the gazelle as a metaphor to answer questions pertaining to the question of Palestinian identity. "Work in Progress," presented at the Bab idDeir Art Gallery, is based on research into the repercussions of the Nakba. By repurposing works created around 1948, Manal breaks down the colonial narrative in the effort to visually document the full extent of the annexation of Palestinian land and the destruction and appropriation of its culture.



Manal comments on the source of inspiration for her work, "An imaginary thread stretches between two worlds in conflict. It pulls me and I pull it; a thread of light and darkness, of beauty and violence... An ancient image passes through our veins and voices, the image of that first man who killed his brother and buried him in the most beautiful spot on earth."



The Solitude of Being 18 Paintings by Ibrahim Jawabreh

**Orient Gallery, Abdoun,
Amman, Jordan**

March 13 to 31, 2018

Images of people are not merely shadows of their owners, moments of their presence captured in a specific place or time. Rather, they are manifested images of their souls. Vague expressions, sensations, and emotions are reduced to a fragment that gives testimony of a past life. The artistic process involved in the representation gives them a new and intense presence, stimulates the appetite for reading and understanding, and amplifies possibilities for explanation and interpretation.

Ever since human beings first became aware of the value of images, the desire to evoke the past and transcend absence has prompted them to commemorate the present, before it becomes past, through various means of representation. We attempt to trick mortality by catching the magical moment that separates presence from absence.



Attempts to retain details of the past are celebrated in the works of the young Palestinian artist Ibrahim Jawabreh, who took the risk of working on a much-consumed artistic theme, namely portraiture. If anything, this reveals the intelligence and madness of a confident, capable artist – two traits missing from most artists today. Born in 1985, he held his first individual exhibition in 2015. Despite the rigidity of his visual experience, his work shows a preoccupation with the techniques of performance art and expressionist forms. Extensive research has enriched his aesthetic experience and artistic intuition, and facilitates his close approach to his creative subjects.

The unity of subject and technical improvisations reveal a diligent handling of color and material. Jawabreh uses spaces and shapes in ways that capture essence and implicit details. Rather than focusing on the details of a physiological face, Jawabreh concentrates on the hidden markings, turning the face into a natural mirror that exposes what lies within.



Resorting to a deliberate dichotomy, the artist combines multiple presences in a single painting that appears smooth, steady, soulless and still; the dark-colored monoculture clearly contains a tragic dimension. Yet, individual colored faces seem vivid despite the neutral texture of their features, giving the impression that they emerge from the frame. Through the processes of peeling, abrasion, and negligence of color, a positive energetic presence is created. These faces, be they individual or multiple, are mostly reduced to one personality, not just by form and size, but also through their consistent and rigid terms. Thereby, they transcend individual nature in favor of a collective. Such simplification serves to explain not the artist's own feelings towards the cruelty, injustice, and oppression affecting his people and country. Rather, interpretation takes us further and to a common humanitarian perspective towards the reality of abandonment that affects any person who is not guaranteed a living space, be it physical or metaphorical. Thus, Jawabreh depicts and reflects upon a vulnerability, fragmentation, and debilitation that threatens our being and promises death.

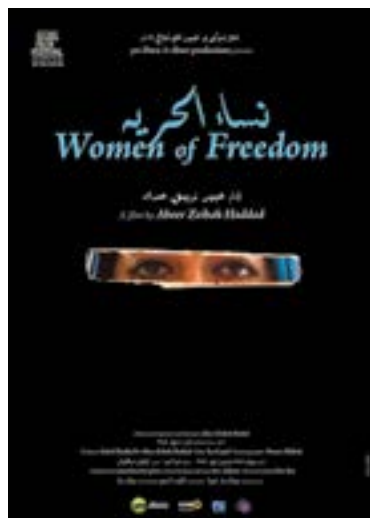
Excerpts from a review by Aziz Azghay, poet and artists, Morocco.

Women of Freedom

Documentary (2016)
57 minutes

By Abeer Zeibak Haddad

Women of Freedom (2016) follows the stories of women who were murdered in the name of “honor” in Arab and Palestinian society. The documentary aims to unravel the social and political circumstances that may lead to this troubling phenomenon. Having witnessed such tragedy in her own life, the director embarks on a journey in which she wanders through Israel and Palestine and collects the stories of victims, survivors, and the killers themselves. By presenting these various testimonies and narratives, the film provides a sensitive and substantive look at a terrible phenomenon that continues, seemingly without an end in sight. The painful depiction of violence, social indifference, and the failure of the rule of law in Israel, “whose government turns a blind eye to the tragedies in service of its own agenda,”* wishes



to encourage a discussion on this silenced and controversial problem that remains prevalent in many societies of today.

Reviews have praised the film as powerful, mesmerizing, and touching.

Women of Freedom was part of the Haifa International Film Festival and the official selection of the Human Rights Film Festival Barcelona, in November 2017. It was presented in the United Kingdom at the Chichester International Film Festival and the London Feminist Film Festival, both in



honors in the history of theatre from Hebrew University and pursued an MA in theater arts from Tel Aviv University, before she embarked on a career in the arts. Among the theatrical works that Abeer has written, produced, and acted in are the plays *Aunt Reem*, and *Chocolates*, both of which have won numerous awards at the International Children's Theatre Festival in Haifa. She also produced the monodrama *Mister Ibrahim and the Quran's Flowers* for the Habima Theatre and the Masrahid Theatre Festival in Akko, where it won first prize. Abeer is the author of an important book about Palestinian theater, titled *The Palestinian Theatre in the Galilee*, and has served as a member of the international jury at the Religion Today Film Festival in Trento, Italy.

In 2011, Abeer produced and directed *Duma*, the first documentary film about sexual abuse of women in Arab and Palestinian society. *Duma* received the award for the best television and video professional production at the Urban TV 2012 Festival in Madrid. For more information on this film, please visit TWiP's archive at

<http://archive.thisweekinpalestine.com/details.php?id=3758&ed=208&edid=208>.

August 2017; in the United States at the Arab Film Festival and the United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF), both in October 2017; and in Africa, it was presented in Harare, Zimbabwe, at the International Images Film Festival for Women (IIFF) in August 2017.

Abeer Zeibak Haddad is a Palestinian filmmaker, theater director, and actress. Born in Nazareth, Abeer lives in Jaffa and currently teaches at Beit Berl College near Kfar Saba, north of Tel Aviv. She obtained a BA with



* 21st Arab Film Festival 2017, review available at <http://fest.arabfilmfestival.org/2017/films/women-of-freedom/>.

Tulkarem, Irtah Village, and their Environs

Courtesy of VisitPalestine.ps

The city of Tulkarem is located 15 kilometers east of the Mediterranean Sea, and 88 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem; it is accessible by public transportation from Ramallah or Nablus.

The hills of the city are between 55 and 120 meters above sea level and offer views onto the Mediterranean coastline. However, the city borders the Green Line and the separation barrier, which Palestinian citizens cannot cross without a special permit from the Israeli military.

Tulkarem, as many places in Palestine, has a long and rich history. The area was settled by the Canaanites in the third millennium BC, and their tombs have been discovered in the vicinity. It later became a Roman post called Birat Soriqa. Since then, the city's population has flourished because of its rich soil and the availability of water.



During the Islamic period, the city was called Tor Al-Karm, "the mount of vineyards." In the middle of the seventeenth century, however, the local pronunciation became "tul" instead of "tor," and it has been known as Tulkarem ever since.

Under the Ottomans, Tulkarem gained importance as it became the capital of the region. The city's beautiful old core dates from that time. Al-Saraya, an Ottoman governmental building, is one of the landmarks of the old city. The design of the building includes two floors and many rooms, with a roof that is structured with a number of domes. When the city was under Jordanian control, the building was used



as the Tulkarem Municipality. Later on, it was divided in order to create two schools. In 1994, the second floor became a heritage center.

During Ottoman times, Tulkarem was a junction on the coastal railroad that stretched from north of Haifa to Cairo and a branch of the narrow-gauge Hejaz railway to Damascus. The Ottoman Tunnel (Al-Kharq) that can be found next to the town of Bala'a, located approximately nine kilometers northeast of Tulkarem, is a sample of splendid architecture. Nowadays, it can be crossed on foot and has sufficient lighting for walks.

Tulkarem's interesting archaeological museum, located in the town center, offers insight into the area's history and contains numerous artifacts from



originally came from villages around Haifa.

About 3 kilometers south of Tulkarem lies the village of Irtah, with the historical site of Khirbet Irtah on the southern side of the town. Sitting in the center of the ruins of Khirbet Irtah is a stone press for grapes that is paved



the Roman period onward, as well as Mamluk items that were discovered in the city's cemetery in 2010.

There are two refugee camps located nearby. Tulkarem Refugee Camp is the second-largest refugee camp in the West Bank. Its refugees originally came from villages and cities in the Haifa, Jaffa, and Qaysaria areas. Nour al-Shams (the light of the sun) Refugee Camp is located at the eastern entrance of the city. The refugees in the camp

with white mosaic. It is surrounded by square mosaics on all sides, and beside it are the ruins of numerous wells and caves. The most prominent and well-known historical building is the Shrine of Jacob's Daughters (Maqam Banat Yaqub). The ground floor of the shrine is a Roman structure, and the upper floor dates back to the Islamic period. The shrine contains two rooms with two domes, and an outside yard that is reminiscent of Islamic architecture.

To learn more about various sites in Palestine, visit our website at www.visitpalestine.ps, or contact the Visit Palestine Information Center in Bethlehem via info@visitpalestine.ps or (02) 277-1992, or visit us at our location in Bethlehem.

Three-way Halazoon (Snails)

Method

1. Get some (in fact lots of) snails. You can either buy them from a trusted source (you won't find them in supermarkets) or collect them from the mountains on the first sunny day after a heavy rainfall. The ones that are now in season are light brown and medium-sized (not huge, like the French escargots, or tiny, like those that grow on tree trunks). How many? That, of course, depends on the appetite of the eaters. We locals usually calculate >50/person. Yes, more than 50, not five! The French usually serve snails in sixes – we cook them in hundreds.

2. Needless to say, your snails should be alive! For the following days, you'll have some hundred pets in your kitchen, being pampered and taken care of. Because snails crawl on muddy lands and stones, and don't mind a bit of soil with their food, they have to be cleaned thoroughly – that is from the outside and from the inside. First give them a wash, a general one, just to remove

Ingredients

- Snails
- The peels of one orange and one lemon
- Green chili peppers (to taste)
- Salt (to taste)
- 1 teaspoon black pepper seeds
- 1 teaspoon cardamom seeds
- 2–3 bay leaves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 bunches of spinach
- Prepared baqdounsiyyeh

the bulk of dirt. Then place them in a big container that can be fitted with a spotted lid (a sieve, for example) to allow them to breathe. Give them food: a few lettuce leaves, the skins of some cucumbers, and sprinkle them with flour. The aim here is to feed them long enough for them to get rid of all the soil in their system, otherwise, the cooked meat will taste as though it contains sand. Two days should be enough. Every day you should wash the snails with running water, place them back into their container, continue with the food and flour, and cover with the lid.

IMPORTANT: Put a heavy weight on the lid or your hundred pets will be crawling all over the place.

After you're sure that they have processed at least two times the clean food you have given them, wash them thoroughly. This means rubbing each of the shells, making sure that all indents and curves are free of soil, mud, or remains. To make the process easier, rub every two or three against each other under running water. Place the cleaned snails in a big pot and cover with water. Any floating snails may mean dead snails. Check them by piercing each one. If the flesh moves, the snail is alive and may be kept. If not, throw it away.

3. Put the pot on low heat, making sure that you keep the snails from crawling up the sides of the pot. Eventually you'll bring the pot to a boil, but that should be done gently. Snails enjoy the warmth very much, so they will peek out of their shells when the water gets warmer. So the longer the warming of the water takes, the more cooked shells will have their meat popping out. That means easier eating.

4. When the pot boils, foam will form. Keep skimming and discarding the foam until the water is clear. Add the condiments. Traditionally, we use the peels of one orange and one lemon, green chili peppers (to taste), salt, black pepper seeds, cardamom seeds, bay leaves, and a cinnamon stick.

5. After they boil, cook them for about an hour on gentle heat until the meat is ready. To check, pull the meat out of the shell using a toothpick, and eat. It should be tender, yet with a bite. Add more salt to the water if needed.

6. To serve, you have three options. The first is to eat them with no further preparations. This is very common among Palestinian snail-eaters. Serve them hot, drained, in a big bowl with enough toothpicks. One should either bite the meat directly or use a toothpick and then sip the liquid in the shell.

7. The second option is to serve them with cooked spinach. For this, you need to clean the spinach, chop it very coarsely, and cook it over gentle heat, using a bit of the water that the snails were cooked in. Add as many shells as needed and cook a bit more. Serve the stew with white rice as a side dish.

8. The third option is to serve unshelled snails with *baqdounsiyyeh* (a dip made with parsley and tahini). For this, take the meat out of a number of shells and mix it into the prepared *baqdounsiyyeh*. Eat as an appetizer, with bread and a squeeze of lemon.

Cooked snails are best kept in their broth, either in the refrigerator (for up to three days) or the freezer.



Thursday 1

12:00 Facebook voting opens for She Leads the Way. This competition for women entrepreneurs celebrates the accomplishments and successes of urban and rural Palestinian women who have benefited from projects implemented by Belgium. It aims to ensure the sustainability and growth of their start-ups or projects. Organized by Consulate General of Belgium. Please vote at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2087168014828328/permalink/2089193937959069/>.

Thursday 8

17:00 A TV program on gender equality discusses the roles and responsibilities of both men and women at home and in society in general. Organized by Ma'an TV, the Spanish Cooperation, and UNFPA. Ma'an TV channel.

JERUSALEM

EXHIBITIONS

Thursdays 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

19:30–22:30 Contemporary Arabesque. Organized by the Museum of Islamic Art. Museum of Islamic Art, Katamon.

Thursday 1 – Saturday 31

11:00–18:00 Abstract Art Month offers art, prints and cards by Palestinian artists. The gallery is open every day, except on Fridays. Levantine Gallery.

FILM SCREENINGS

Saturday 3

19:00–20:00 *Writing on Snow*. The Palestinian National Theatre.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Monday 05

16:00–20:00 She Films, She Makes, She Leads the Way offers activities and exhibitions that involve 15 women's organizations, partners of Italian NGOs in Gaza and the West Bank, and celebrate the empowerment of women. Organized by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, Jerusalem (AICS). Yabous Cultural Center.

Thursday 08

18:00–20:00 She Leads the Way is a cultural event that showcases and celebrates Palestinian women and their achievements. Organized by the British Council, UN Women and WCLAC. Notre Dame Guest House, Auditorium.

Sunday 25

13:30–15:30 Palm Sunday Walk, organized by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. From the Mount of Olives towards the Old City of Jerusalem. SYMPOSIUM

Thursday 08

09:00–16:00 PaLiMUN Model United Nations Conference. Al-Quds University.

Monday 12

9:00–18:00 Presentation of the Encyclical Letter by Pope Francis, opening the conference titled *Laudato si—the Integral Ecology for the Safeguarding of the Common Home*. Organized by the Custody of the Holy Land's Commission for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation. Pontifical Institute at Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center, opposite New Gate, Old City.

BETHLEHEM

CHILDREN'S EVENTS

Saturday 10

16:00–19:00 Easter egg hunt, carnival and kids show. Osgh Grab, Beit Sahour.

Saturday 31

12:00–16:00 Palestinian Child Day Festival encompasses workshops and performances by Ghirass, Amwaj Children's Choir, and the Palestinian Circus School. Organized by Ghirass Cultural Center and Palestine Philharmonie. Bethlehem Convention Palace, Solomon's Pools.

CONCERTS

Thursday 22

17:00 Concours de la Chanson Francophone – Francophone Song Competition celebrates the French language and showcases the talent of young Palestinian singers. Organized by Institut Français de Jérusalem and Alliance Française de Bethléem in cooperation with Palestine Philharmonie. Bethlehem Convention Palace, Solomon's Pools.

Saturday 24

18:00 Intersections: Palestine's Vibrant Heritage features a joint performance of the Shorouq Dabke Ensemble, Amwaj Children's Choir, and Nawa Arabic Music Ensemble. Organized by Palestine Philharmonie. Bethlehem Convention Palace, Solomon's Pools.

EXHIBITIONS

Thursday 1 – Saturday 10

09:00–17:00 Work in Progress features paintings by Manal Mahamid. Organized by Bab idDeir Art Gallery. Deik Quarter, Manger Street.

FILM SCREENINGS

Monday 5

17:00 *Last Men in Aleppo*. Organized by Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture and Odeh Films. Auditorium of Dar al-Kalima.

Thursday 29

17:00 *Wajib* by Annemarie Jacir. Organized by Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture and Annemarie Jacir. Auditorium of Dar al-Kalima.

Thursday 8

17:00 *When I Saw You*. Organized by Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture and Annemarie Jacir. Auditorium Dar al-Kalima.

Thursday 22

17:00 *The Salt of This Sea*. Organized by Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture and Annemarie Jacir. Auditorium Dar al-Kalima.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Saturday 3

21:00–23:00 Music From the Soul is performed by Nessi Gomez. SOUL live music lounge, near Shepherds Field, Beit Sahour.

Sunday 11

17:00–20:00 A celebration of International Women's Day offers a variety of activities. The Russian Center for Science and Culture.

Friday 23

08:00–16:00 The 6th Marathon of Palestine Freedom of Movement. Organized by the Palestine Olympic Committee (POC). Meeting point is Manger Square.

TOURS

Thursday 15 – Friday 16

14:00–11:00 Camping in Palestine near Al Rashaida Bedouin community, south-east of Bethlehem. Organized by Tree of Life Café and Library. Meeting point is Tree of Life Café, Beit Sahour.

Tuesday 20

10:00–15:00 Hike in Battir, organized by Palestine Marathon within a program offering hiking tours in Palestine. Meeting point is Manger Square.

Wednesday 21

08:00–17:00 Hike in Jericho and the Dead Sea, organized by Palestine Marathon within a program offering hiking tours in Palestine. Meeting point is Manger Square.

Thursday 22

09:00–16:00 Tour of Hebron, organized by Palestine Marathon within a program offering hiking tours in Palestine. Meeting point is Manger Square.

Saturday 22

09:00–16:00 Tour of Jerusalem, organized by Palestine Marathon within a program offering hiking tours in Palestine. Meeting point is Manger Square.

Sunday 23

08:00–17:00 Tour of Nablus, organized by Palestine Marathon within a program offering hiking tours in Palestine. Meeting point is Manger Square.

HEBRON

SYMPOSIUM

Tuesday 20

09:00–15:00 Tourism and Development is a scientific symposium, held for the second time in Palestine to discuss the realities and challenges in these sectors. Organized by Alquds Open University and Hebron Governorate. Hebron Governorate Hall.

BIRZEIT

EXHIBITIONS

Sunday 18

15:00–18:00 Opening of Labour of Love: New Approaches to Palestinian Embroidery, curated by Rachel Dedman. Organized by the Palestinian Museum and Al Taawon Association. The exhibition runs until August 25, 2018. The Palestinian Museum.

SYMPOSIUM

Monday 12

12:00–18:00 Teaching Palestine: Pedagogical Praxis/Indivisibility of Justice is an international political, social, economic, and socio-cultural conference about Palestine. Organized by Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies, San Francisco State University; Ibrahim Abu Lughod Institute for International Studies; and Institute of Women's Studies. Birzeit University.

JERICHO

SPECIAL EVENTS

Thursday 1

17:00–20:00 PITTl Family Fun offers a night of entertainment for the entire family. Organized by PITTl Academy. Bab Al Shams Resort.

Monday 5

09:00–13:00 Official visit of a rural community in Jericho with the aim of supporting rural women in marginalized areas. Organized by the Norwegian Representative Office to the Palestinian Authority and UNESCO. Meeting point Ras 'Ein al-'Auja, near the gas station.

SYMPOSIUM

Tuesday 6

00:11–03:30 My Rights are My Protection Shield is an activity that aims to strengthen gender equality within a project that fosters protection mechanisms for children in the Jordan Valley (Area C). Implemented by AVSI Palestine in partnership with YWCA Jericho, Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation (BASR), St. John Eye Hospital (SJEH), and the Palestinian Ministry of Education; funded by the Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo and the Consulate General of Italy in Jerusalem. Jericho Governorate Hall.

TOURS

Sunday 4

08:00–17:00 Hiking in Palestine: Wadi Al Qelt. Organized by Tree of Life Café and Library, Beit Sahour. Meeting point is Ein Fawar; passing Ein Al-Qelt the hike will end at Othman House in Jericho.

NAZARETH

THEATRE

Friday 2

20:00–22:00 *The Admission* is a drama about memory and denial surrounding the events of 1948. Organized by Alhaneen Theatre in collaboration with Jaffa Theatre. Alhaneen Theatre, Industrial Zone Street.

RAMALLAH

BOOK LAUNCHES

Monday 19

18:00 Book launch of *11 Stories from the Palestinian Exile*. Organized by the AM Qattan Foundation and the Institute for Palestine Studies. AM Qattan Foundation.

CONCERTS

Thursday 15

18:00–19:30 A musical evening with the BSF orchestra, conducted by Eugeniy Chevkenov, with Ayoub Rabah, cello. Organized by Barenboim-Said Foundation, Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS).

Friday 16

17:00–19:00 Piano concert. Organized by Al-Kamandjati. Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS).

EXHIBITIONS

Thursday 1

12:30–18:00 *Women in Revolution* is presented as part of a wider research project. Organized by the AM Qattan Foundation in partnership with Birzeit University Museum and Gallery One. Birzeit University Museum.

Friday 30

11:00–19:00 Art exhibition presents works by Khalil Dajani in commemoration of the Palestinian Land Day (Yom Al-Ard). Organized by Dar Zahran and Terra Fidea. Dar Zahran Heritage Building.

FILM SCREENINGS

Saturday 3

18:00–20:00 *Kamkameh* by Eslam Alayan and Areej Abu Eid, *.com* by Fatema Bani Odeh, and *Black and White* by Rana Mattar are presented within Gaza Young Women Filmmakers' Month. Organized by Shashat Women Cinema. Sakakini Cultural Center.

Saturday 10

18:00–20:00 *Separation* by Areej Abu Eid, *Manshar Ghaseelo* by Alaa Desoki and Areej Abu Eid, and *Out of Frame* by Reham Al-Ghazali are presented within Gaza Young Women Filmmakers' Month. Organized by Shashat Women Cinema. Sakakini Cultural Center.

Saturday 17

18:00–20:00 *N.G/Kooz* by Reham Al-Ghazali, *Madleen* by Reham Al-Ghazali, *Sardine and Pepper* by Athar Al-Jadili and Alaa Desoki are presented within Gaza Young Women Filmmakers' Month. Organized by Shashat Women Cinema. Sakakini Cultural Center.

Wednesday 21

19:00–21:00 *War, an Event Free of People* is a film that explores the new German cinema through the lens of Harun Farocki, one of Germany's most influential filmmakers. Organized by the Goethe Institute. French German Cultural Centre Gallery.

Saturday 24

18:00–20:00 *Cut!* by Athar Al-Jadili, *Noise!* by Alaa Desoki, and *It looks pretty...but!* by Rana Mattar are presented within Gaza Young Women Filmmakers' Month. Organized by Shashat Women Cinema. Sakakini Cultural Center.

Saturday 31

18:00–20:00 *Step & a Half* by Enass Ayish and *A very hot summer* by Areej Abu Eid are presented within Gaza Young Women Filmmakers' Month. Organized by Shashat Women Cinema. Sakakini Cultural Center.

LECTURES

Sunday 18

17:00–20:00 Café francophone meets during the month of Francophonie with special guest Thierry Grillet. Organized by the French Institute. French German Cultural Center.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Monday 12

17:00–20:00 Monday Music Jam invites everyone to come and enjoy the library with its variety of books and a live music jam. Organized by the Goethe Institute. French German Cultural Center.

Thursday 15

18:00–20:00 DJAM 2, a top DJ festival is held to support youth music in Palestine and market Palestinian talents inside and outside the country. Organized by DJAM Palestine. Grand Park Hotel.

Thursday 15

17:00–19:00 BlaBla Language Exchange is a free event that will start at one table with an English group. When at least 3 people want to practice another language, they can form another subgroup. Work Factory, Al Manara.

Sunday 18

10:00–16:00 Olive Tree Planting to commemorate Palestinian Land Day (Yom Al-Ard), followed by a free heritage tour and the possibility to engage in volunteer work at Terra Fidea: Land of Fidelity. Organized by Dar Zahran Heritage Building. Terra Fidea.

Sunday 18

19:00–21:00 Das Deutschcafé offers the opportunity to meet like-minded people, practice German language outside the classroom, and play games. Organized by Goethe Institute. Ziryab Restaurant.

Saturday 24

19:30–21:30 During Earth Hour Day, participants will spend one hour without electricity, followed by an event that aims to raise awareness about the importance of sustainability and climate change. Organized by the Goethe Institute. French German Cultural Center.

SYMPOSIA

Saturday 3

16:00–20:00 TEDx youth event is a program of local, self-organized event. Organized by TEDx. Elite Venue and Business Center, Al Masyoon.

Thursday 8

18:00–20:00 Ummahat Al Asra (Mothers of Detainees) is a conference about mothers whose children are imprisoned (discussion in English). Organized by the French Institute and French Institute for the Near East. French German Cultural Centre.

Tuesday 13 – Wednesday 14

09:00–17:00 Social Impact Measurement is a hands-on workshop. Go Global Headquarter, Al-Tireh.

THEATER

Saturday 10

18:30 Performance to celebrate *El-Funoun 39th Anniversary–Tallat* with Bara'm El-Funoun. Organized by El-Funoun Palestinian Dance Troupe. Ramallah Cultural Palace.

Thursday 29

18:00 *Premier of Coffee in Town* by Palcircus. Ramallah's Cultural Palace.

JENIN

EXHIBITIONS

Thursday 1

11:00–17:00 *The Beginning of a Story* tells stories through photography. Majida Studios, Nazareth Street.

GAZA

SPECIAL EVENTS

Thursday 1

08:30–12:00 The Time Is Now: Rural and Urban Activists Transforming Women's Lives aims to shed light on the importance of technology as a tool to promote human rights, civic engagement, and women's participation in recovery efforts. Organized by ENABEL, Belgian Implementing Agency. UCAS, University of Applied Sciences.

Monday 5

09:00–13:00 Official visit to a rural community in Gaza with the aim of supporting rural women in marginalized areas. Organized by the Norwegian Representative Office to the Palestinian Authority and UNESCO. Beit Lahia.

THEATER

Tuesday 6 – Wednesday 7

15:00–17:00 *Black Light*, a cultural event in the series She Leads the Way, presents a play about the situation of women in Gaza, followed by an open discussion, and an exhibition of paintings. Organized by UNESCO in Partnership with Theater Day Production (TDP). TDP-YMCA Compound.

TAYBEH

TOURS

Friday 2, Sunday 11, Saturday 24, Friday 30

10:30–13:30 Experience Taybeh is a walking tour of Taybeh village where participants visit the Old City, an archeological site, and Taybeh Brewery and Winery. For more info and reservation contact Taybeh Golden Hotel at 02-289-9440.

INTERNATIONAL

EXHIBITIONS

Thursday 1 – Saturday 3

11:00–19:00 Keyword: Palestine is an art exhibition and auction in support of the Institute for Palestine Studies. Organized by Dar El-Nimer for Arts and Culture in collaboration with the Institute for Palestine Studies. Dar El-Nimer for Arts and Culture, America Street, Clemenceau, Beirut. Bids can be placed at www.keywordpalestine.com.

FILM SCREENINGS

Tuesday 6

19:00–20:30 *Yamo*, a documentary by Rami Nihawi, is followed by Q&A with the director. Dar El-Nimer for Arts and Culture, America Street, Clemenceau, Beirut.

Tuesday 13

19:00–20:00 *My Father is Still a Communist*, a documentary by Ahmad Ghossein, is followed by Q&A with the director. Dar El-Nimer for Arts and Culture, Beirut.

Tuesday 20

19:00–20:00 *My Father Looks Like Abdel Nasser*, a documentary by Farah Kassem, is followed by Q&A with the director. Dar El-Nimer for Arts and Culture, Beirut.

Tuesday 27

19:00–20:00 *Home Sweet Home*, a documentary by Nadine Naoos. Dar El-Nimer for Arts and Culture, Beirut.

THEATER

Thursday 1 – Friday 2

19:30–20:30 *Ayyoubé*, written and directed by Awad Awad, presents the biography of a Palestinian woman in a Lebanese refugee camp. Dar El-Nimer for Arts and Culture, Beirut.



Ambassador Hotel ★★★★★

Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem, 91196, Tel: 541 2222, Fax: 582 8202
reservation@jerusalemambassador.com, www.jerusalemambassador.com

/amb.jerusalem

(118 rooms; bf; cf; mr; res)



Christmas Boutique Hotel

Ali Ben Abi Taleb Street, Jerusalem
Tel: 02-6282588, Fax: 02-6264417
christmashotel@bezeqint.net



Gloria Hotel

Latin Patriarch St. 33, Jerusalem
Tel 628 2431, Fax: 628 2401
gloriahl@netvision.net.il

(104 rooms; mr; res)



Jerusalem Hotel

15 Antara Ben Shadad St., Jerusalem
Tel: 628 3282, Fax: 6283282, raed@jrshotel.com, www.jrshotel.com

Jerusalem Hotel



Knight's Palace Hotel

Freres Street, New Gate, Jerusalem
Tel 628 2537, Fax: 627 5390
kp@actcom.co.il

(50 rooms; mr; res)



Pontifical Institute

Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center

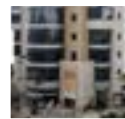
3 Paratroopers Road, P.O. Box 20531, Jerusalem, 91204
Tel: 627 9111, Fax: 627 1995, www.notredamecenter.org

Pontifical Institute Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center



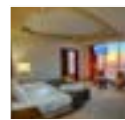
Seven Arches Hotel ★★★★★

Mount of Olives, Jerusalem, 91190
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svnarch@bezeqint.net, www.7arches.com



Caesar Hotel Ramallah

Al Masyoun, Ramallah
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info@caesar-hotel.ps, www.caesar-hotel.ps



Carmel Hotel ★★★★★

Al-Masyoun, Ramallah, Palestine
Tel: 2972222 Fax: 2966966,
www.carmelhotel.ps

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Lavender Boutique Hotel

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Taybeh Golden Hotel

Main Street 100, Taybeh (Ramallah District)
Tel 289-9440
info@taybehgoldenhotel.com, www.taybehgoldenhotel.com



Sancta Maria Hotel

Dr. Geminer Street, Beyhlehem
Tel : 02-2467374/5/6, Fax : 02-2767377
info@sanctamariahhotel.com, www.sanctamariahhotel.com

81 rooms



Jericho Resorts ★★★★★

Bisan Street, Near Hisham Palace, 162 Jericho, Tel: 232 1255, Fax: 232 2189
reservation@jerichoresorts.com, www.jerichoresorts.com

Jericho Resort Village



Al Diwan Restaurant Ambassador Hotel
 Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem, 91196, Tel: 541 2222, Fax: 582 8202
reservation@jerusalemambassador.com, www.jerusalemambassador.com
 f /amb.jerusalem Middle Eastern, French, and Italian Cuisine



Borderline Restaurant Café
 Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem 97200
 Tel 532 8342, contact@shahwan.org
 Italian Cuisine



Cheese & Wine Rooftop Restaurant
 (Pontifical Institute Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center)
 Tel: 627 9177, rooftop@notredamecenter.org, www.notredamecenter.org
 f Notre Dame Rooftop/Cheese & Wine Restaurant



Jerusalem Hotel Restaurant (Kan Zaman)
 15 Antara Ben Shadad St., Jerusalem
 Tel: 628 3282, Fax: 6283282, raed@jrshotel.com, www.jrshotel.com
 f Jerusalem Hotel Mediterranean Cuisine



Pasha's
 Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem 97200
 Tel 582 5162, 532 8342, contact@shahwan.org
 Oriental Food



Bab idDeir Cafe & Bar
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 Tel: 2769222
 f /BabidDeirCB/



Martini Bar
 AlMasyoun, Ramallah
 Tel: 2979400
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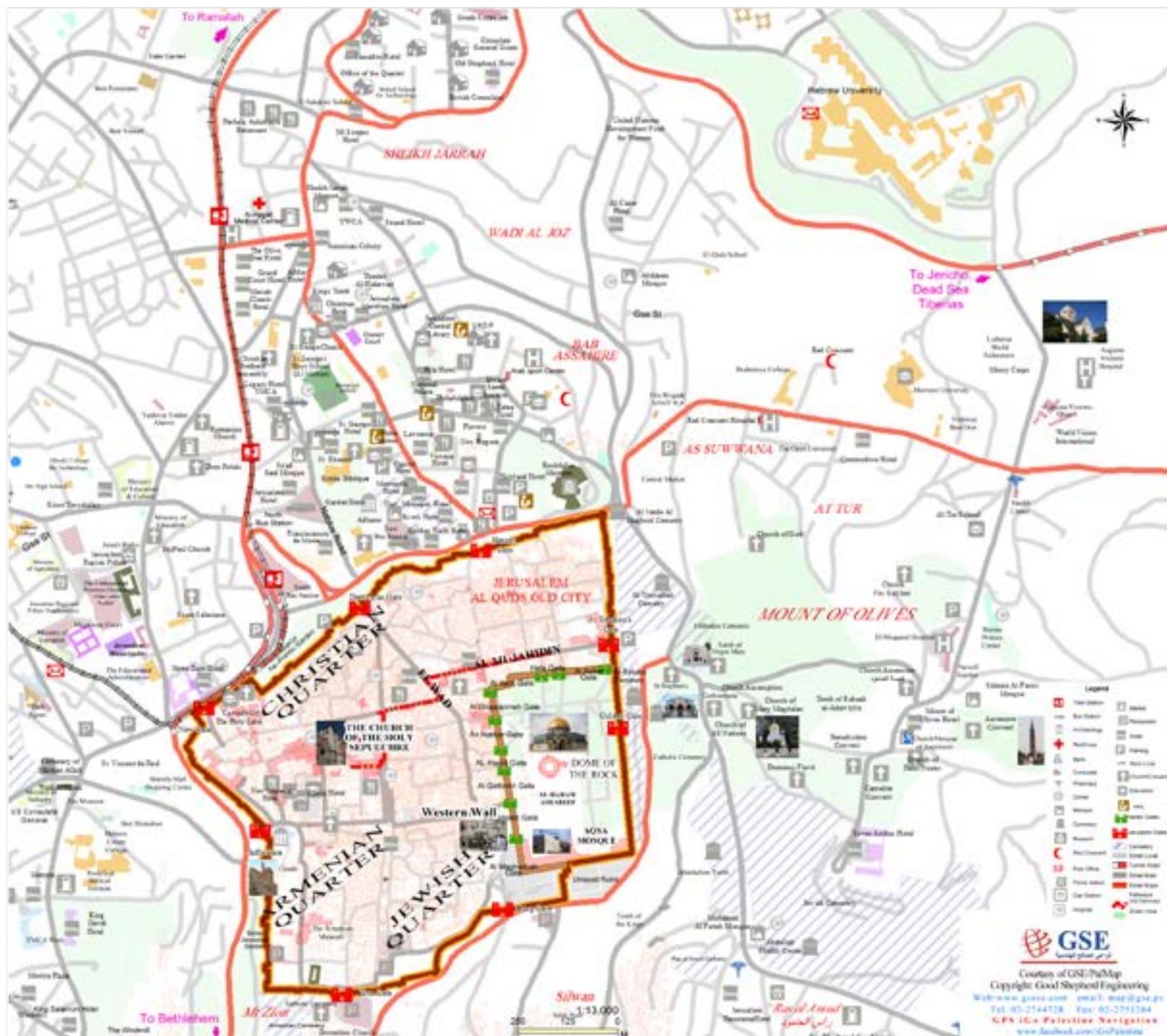


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Palestine A Unique Travel Destination

I recently watched a two-minute-and-forty-three-second documentary titled Palestine – A Unique Travel Destination, put out by the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and made possible with the support of the UNDP/PAPP. The description reads, “This video segment showcases Palestine as a tourism destination that offers selective programs with a wide range of tourism facilities to cater to the needs of all sorts of travelers.” And it certainly does that. Politics is not mentioned in this video, which is quite refreshing. The video includes stunning clips of hiking trails, adventurous motorcycling, five-star resorts with inviting swimming pools, gyms, and Jacuzzis, and an Asian couple enjoying a sumptuous breakfast on the balcony of the Jacir Palace Hotel in Bethlehem - a beautiful building and magnificent example of Palestinian architectural heritage. The video also showcases boutique hotels, culinary experiences that include both local cuisine and exquisite fine dining, and nightlife with people having fun, be it outdoors or at a restaurant or bar. There are scenic shots of sunsets, excerpts from a musical concert, and finally a great image of a super moon. Those two minutes and forty-three seconds surely include an abundance of beautiful content!

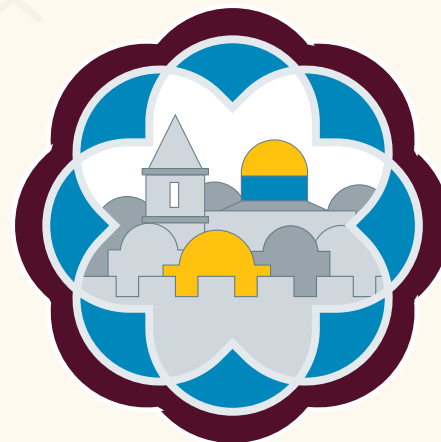
Away from the radar of mainstream media, our Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has been very active in promoting Palestine and encouraging tourists and pilgrims to come for a visit. Only recently, it launched www.travelpalestine.ps, and I understand that each year, ministry representatives participate in no less than 20 of the most important international tourism exhibitions worldwide. According to the ministry's statistics, Palestine welcomed 2.7 million visitors last year, and the number of overnight stays went up to 1.7 million - interestingly enough, the two countries that sent us the most tourists and pilgrims are Poland and Romania. In fact, a lot is happening on the tourism level.

All this is taking place while Palestine is practically at the epicenter of Middle East politics, and close to nothing positive is reported that would encourage tourists and pilgrims to come and visit our country. Can you imagine what will happen once peace prevails?

On the occasion of International Women's Day, celebrated on March 8, the March issue of This Week in Palestine focuses on Palestinian women and their ongoing struggle. H.E. Rula Ma'ayah, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, is one of these women who struggle to make the voice of Palestine heard throughout the world. Our acknowledgment stems from the fact that Palestine takes pride in its professional women who are able to confront a number of challenges simultaneously - and win. Lastly, a word of gratitude and appreciation to H.E. Dr. Haifa Al Agha, Minister of Women's Affairs, who has contributed an article to this issue of This Week in Palestine. Palestine is proud of its women achievers.



Sani Meo
Publisher



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