

My vision as a Palestinian feminist

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I believe that any feminist movement in Palestine must have a political and social perspective, which calls not only for freedom from military occupation, but also promotes living in a free society, based on social justice and equality between all its members. A just society, which respects volition and liberties of people, including the freedom for men and women, of having control over their bodies, their sexuality and their identities. A society that guarantees to its members, the freedom to choose the course of their lives and their different lifestyles, and help them achieve their goals be them social, economic or political.

It must also have a broad feminist vision, which rejects oppression in all its forms, and that works against it. It should strives to rebuild community and political system, and fights the patriarchal system that controls gender relations, and imposes social roles that give power to men and inferiority to women and others who are different and vulnerable. A vision that respects diversity and freedom of religious and political beliefs. In addition to the essential struggle to achieve freedom from Israeli occupation, the right of refugees to return to their homes that were forcibly expelled from them, and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state.

If we examine the Palestinian history, we will find that Palestinian society has undergone a series of political, economic and social changes through almost a century of colonialism. The feminist movement was not immune to these changes, since it is one of the main structures of Palestinian society. Unfortunately, the single reality of the Palestinian history, is the constant colonial context that affects the changes that have occurred or occurs in Palestinian society. As a result of the continuation of colonialism we have had a visible impact on the formation of social phenomena, to reproduce collective consciousness and influence on the way of living in Palestinian society in general.

The attempt to identify the nature of feminism and its identity and practices in Palestine, is undoubtedly a subject to these changes and their implications as well. Reality in Palestine is saturated

with a mixture of national and class oppression, imposed by the occupier. But this oppression condenses on the shoulders of Palestinian women living in a patriarchal male-dominated society.

Consequently, there are two key issues that must be taken into account when discussing Palestinian women and the Palestinian women's movement in general: First, the oppression of the occupier experienced by all Palestinians, regardless of their gender, and second, the patriarchy in Palestinian society and its negative consequences on women in particular.

Palestinian women live in a circle of persecution that is necessary to bear in mind, when it comes to understanding the feminist movement in Palestine, which is even more complicated and condensed in rural and marginalized areas.

Hence, the liberation movement of Palestinian women, has had an early start compared to the social mobility of women in the world, example of that is the Palestinian Women's Union, which was founded in 1921 and was the first organization of women with a political agenda, where the activism of women, was mingled with the national liberation movement. In addition to the many examples of women political prisoners and martyrs and active women political activists, who have fought against the British mandate and against the Israeli occupation. Palestinian women made a huge difference in the popular mass movement against the occupier. While men were and still direct recipients of violence, women have to bear with this violence indirect costs: shouldering the family, running the household in men's absence and working as a breadwinner. Unfortunately, many of the Palestinian women are not prepared for that role. That is why they need support and above all, social justice in society that still turning a blind eye to all their contributions in maintaining its well-being.