THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND FEMINIST MOVEMENTS IN LEBANON

Between the Late 1800s and the Early 2020s

By Marwan Issa

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

About the author

Marwan Issa is a researcher, writer and political organizer with expertise in political economy, international relations, gender justice and human rights issues, particularly in crisis-ridden contexts.

This publication was reviewed and edited by **Cory Rodgers**, Assistant Professor of Migration Studies at the Lebanese American University.
He is an anthropologist with research focusing on mobility, displacement, identity, and the provision of humanitarian and development aid.

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INTRODUCTION

There has been limited historical research on media coverage of women's rights and feminist movements in Lebanon and the Arab world. Existing studies have often focused on specific types of media, such as newspapers and modern media companies. Few studies have provided a critical perspective on the role of media in stereotyping women when they take on political, journalistic and activist roles (Mady, 2015; Iborscheva, 2012). The contributions of women in the development of various forms of media remains highly overlooked. In reference to Arab television media, for example, Sakr (2007, pp. 89) asserts that generations of "Arab women journalists and activists are among the neglected historical forces".

For the last century, colonialism and patriarchy have reinforced one another across the Arab world to instill discriminatory and oppressive power dynamics and keep governance controlled by a few ruling elites. Such dynamics have been challenged repeatedly by women's rights and feminist organizers. However, the history of feminist movements in Lebanon and the Arab world can be traced centuries back (Char, 2019), a fact that stands against the orientalist claim that feminism is a recent phenomenon in the region. The Arab world has long been ripe with feminist initiatives, often carried out hand-in-hand with anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles.

Media coverage has always been shaped by sociopolitical context, and the choice of themes within media coverage often reflected prevailing discourses and counter-discourses about the role of women and feminist movements. As Arab World Studies scholar Miriam Cooke asserts, language is "the reservoir of collective remembrance" (1987, pp. 57), and this desk review extends language to include its more general discursive dimension, expressed through various forms of media.

Accordingly, this review provides an overview of discourses, representations and styles that have defined the coverage of women's rights and feminist movements in Lebanon and the Arab World, and highlights the contributions of key influential feminist and women's rights figures. It spans the late 1800s up until 2022, with a periodization that considers differences across decades, major historical events, and shifts in the organization of feminist initiatives.

The review was done with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung's Lebanon office. It is situated as part of a wider study on the history of organizing for women's rights and feminist movements in Lebanon and the MENA region. It follows the dissemination of a manuscript on Reclaiming and Decolonizing the History of the Women's Rights and Feminist Movements in Lebanon, written by Lina Abou Habib, Carla Akil and Marwan Issa.

Similar to the manuscript, the research stems from an appreciation of the importance of archiving efforts around women's rights and feminist movements in Lebanon, the region, and the world. It aims to improve organizers' and scholars' understanding of the context and legacy around which such movements operate.

Scoping of Media Coverage

For scoping purposes, the desk review focuses on a wide range of media forms, going beyond traditional journalistic coverage to include novels, theatrical representations, and other types of media that covered and shaped the discourse around women's rights and feminist movements in the region.

The review analyzes the roles played by various kinds of media across different eras or time periods. We also consider the power structures that motivated and constrained media institutions, such as the internal hierarchies within newsrooms and the ideologies that prevailed at influential publishing houses.

Choice of Time Period

The review covers the period from the late 1800s until 2022, for two specific reasons.

First, media coverage focused on women's rights and feminist causes was present long before the 1800s if we take wider definitions of media, taking on several forms in earlier centuries. However, the exponential increase in journals focused on such issues and the development of a modern type of media coverage occupied with such issues, both technically and philosophically, can be adequately placed around *Nahda* or Arab Awakening narratives in the late 1800s.

Second, there is a relative scarcity of resources on Arab media before this era, which limits the ability of our limited desk review to provide comparison with modern forms. Nonetheless, we do make reference to earlier forms of media coverage of women's rights and feminist movements to acknowledge the historical depth of this issue.

LATE 1800S AND EARLY 1900S

A RISE IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN WRITING AND DEBATE

The late 1800s were an important period of progress for women's rights in the Levant and the wider Arab region, with the foundation of numerous women's associations such as Bakurat Suriya (Syrian Dawn) and Zahrat al-Ihsan (Flower of Charity) in Beirut. Women-led salons were established in Aleppo, Cairo, and Alexandria. Women-led news platforms and magazines also emerged on the scene, most notably in Egypt and Greater Syria under the leadership of rising women's rights journalists, writers and advocates (Ashour et al., 2008).

The societal and economic transformations witnessed throughout the 19th century had important ramifications on the discourse around women's rights in Lebanon and the Arab region. Nahda-era narratives reflected discursive changes within the Ottoman Empire and across global avenues (Zachs, 2018), raising questions of culture, the economy, and political rights. The period was one of intensifying intellectual debate and globalization, which intersected with debates on gender issues, particularly during the second half of the 19th century in the Greater Syrian region and Beirut (Zachs and Halevi, 2009). Beirut saw the establishment of the Sisters of Love women's society in 1847, which focused on providing literacy training, a home for wayward girls and a tuberculosis sanatorium (Robinson, 2015).

Al Nahda al-Nisā'iyya

Within the wider *Nahda*, there was also a women's awakening, or *al-nahda al-nisā'iyya*, characterized in particular by a movement to improve women's access to education. Salons, the press, journals, charities and other media played a role in bringing women together and centering gender issues within wider societal discussions (Robinson, 2015).

Women's rights initiatives from the late 1800s until the 1910s were focused to a large degree on educational and charity-related initiatives (Al Rahby, 2014). Many stakeholders came from the Arab middle- to upper-classes, with a few exceptions like writer

Zaynab Fawwaz, who will be discussed later (Schubert, 2020; Al Rahby, 2014). Notable initiatives include Anbarah Salam Khalidi's Awakening of the Young Arab Women Association (al-Khatib, 1984) and May Ziyadeh's cultural salon (CeSSRA, 2025).

Linkages between education, access to income, and political rights were established through several platforms (Booth, 1995) as women-led initiatives sprung up in various places, including both urban and rural areas as well as in the diaspora. The overseas involvement gave these initiatives different national, regional, and global dimensions (al-Khatib, 1984).

Writers such as Warda al-Yaziji and A'isha al-Taymuriya challenged the exclusion of women writers from public fora by pursuing journalism and publishing novels, breaking the mold and carving out a space for women in these domains. However, the visibility of women remained obscured by the use of pseudonyms, likely a response to the dangers of being an outspoken woman, which al-Yaziji, al-Taymuriya and writer Sulayma Abi Rashid also challenged (Robinson, 2015).

Biographical writings centered on women also increased. Zaynab Fawwaz produced a biographical dictionary of women, which is considered the second of such works after writer Maryam Nahhas Nawfal's volume on famous women's lives in 1879 (Booth, 1995). Booth (2019) considers Fawwaz's biographical dictionary as "a work of feminist history" and describes the writer as someone who "appears to have been fearless"..

A Rise in Gendered Debates

In the late 1800's, debates on women's suffrage were a dominant theme in the discourse on women's rights. Women writers tackled legislative and political matters, laying the foundations of later political debates about electoral reform, but the debates addressed a complex mix of legislative, social equality and participation issues (Zachs, 2018). While the debates were largely restricted to middle class women - who were themselves still not participating in the electoral systems – these debates shaped future public opinion about gender equality.

Zachs and Halevi (2009) explain how the debate on women in the late 1800s was an interactive process as opposed to a top-down one. The writers who prompted these questions successfully raised attention to this issue among their communities of readers and critics. This was enabled by the rise in female readership, particularly among women who were critical of the gendered stereotypes that prevailed in newspapers.

Below are some examples of debates that took place around women's rights:

- One such debate was between Syrian-Lebanese Hanna Kurani, who opposed the idea of women working outside the domain of the household, and Zaynab Fawwaz, who supported women's employment and suffrage (Zachs, 2018). Kurani's position did not emanate from doubts regarding women's intellectual capabilities, but rather from a proportionally higher valuation of women's roles as wives and household managers, which was reflected in an article in the newspaper "Lebanon". Fawwaz, on the other hand, argued that there are no reasons that prevent women from engaging in public works and political issues (Jomaa, 2001).

- Another such debate took place around the Hadiqat al-Akhbar (The Garden of News) journal. Edited and published by Khalil al-Khuri, it often included humorous anecdotes based on gendered stereotypes of women's roles. For example:

  "If you wish to transmit information quickly from one place to another, you should tell it to a woman and then you will see that in a short time the message will pass from one place to the other faster than the blink of an eye."

The journal's growing female readership were unamused, according to Zachs and Halevi (2009). The ensuing backlash led al-Khuri to disown authorship of the anecdote, dispelling any notion that Arab women in this era lacked voice and agency.

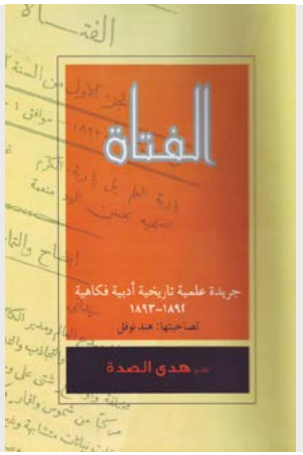
Other debates addressed the scientific or pseudoscientific basis of patriarchal claims about women's intellectual abilities. Journals such as al-Jinan, Al-Muqtataf and Thamarat al-Funun appeared in Beirut with the aim of advancing arts and sciences, but they also broached the topic of women's education and played a notable role addressing the so-called "woman question", an umbrella term for debates on women's rights and gender roles. Al-Muqtataf, however, also featured writers who opposed women's push for equality and who adopted (pseudo)scientific arguments to discredit women's intellectual capabilities. This includes writers like Shibli Shumayil, who employed thoughts that originated from Western thinkers. Women quickly responded to Shumayil under the title of "[The Defense of Women by Women]", in what were "secular" and scientific rationales for argumentation (Zachs and Halevi, 2009).

Newspapers, magazines and circulated pamphlets provided a platform for debate on the "woman question". On one hand, actors such as Anisa al-Shartouni penned pamphlets emphasizing that women must stay in their houses to take care of domestic affairs. On the other, writers such as Salma Kalia asserted in 1895 that a woman "is not lower in rank [than a man]", and that this is "particularly obvious after science and enlightenment has uncovered the true and natural position of a woman, her capacities and mental prowess and her ability to [do] all that a man practices" (Kalia, 1895, cited in Khater, 2014).

Women-led Magazines and Journals

Many Arabic-language journals were established during this period to publish works authored by women, and yet others were established with women as the target audience (Booth, 1995). More generally, this was the time when printing and publishing were emerging as the main mechanisms for circulating new ideas, which was part of the spark for the "transformational era" of Nahda (Rifai, 2022, pp. 4). This period also saw more women become active participants in the general Arabic press.

Egypt, and in particularly Cairo and Alexandria, were major sites for women writers and journalists to set up magazines, partial-



Picture 1
Source: The Women and Memory Forum

ly due to its relative autonomy from Ottoman authority (Al-Qaiwani, 2015). These journals were not only circulated in the Arab region, but also among diasporas, making their way as far as Boston, São Paolo, and Mexico City (Robinson, 2015). This rise in Arab women's writing must not be dissociated from international feminist movements, efforts to adapt the women's rights movement to the context of the Arab region, and the overall Nahda sociopolitical transformations.

Al-Fatat was established in Alexandria in 1892 and is widely acknowledged as the first women's journal in Arabic (Ghoussoub; Robinson, 2015). It was founded by journalist Hind Nawfal, the first Arab woman to establish a woman's magazine with the explicit goal of defending women's rights. (Al Qaiwani, 2015).

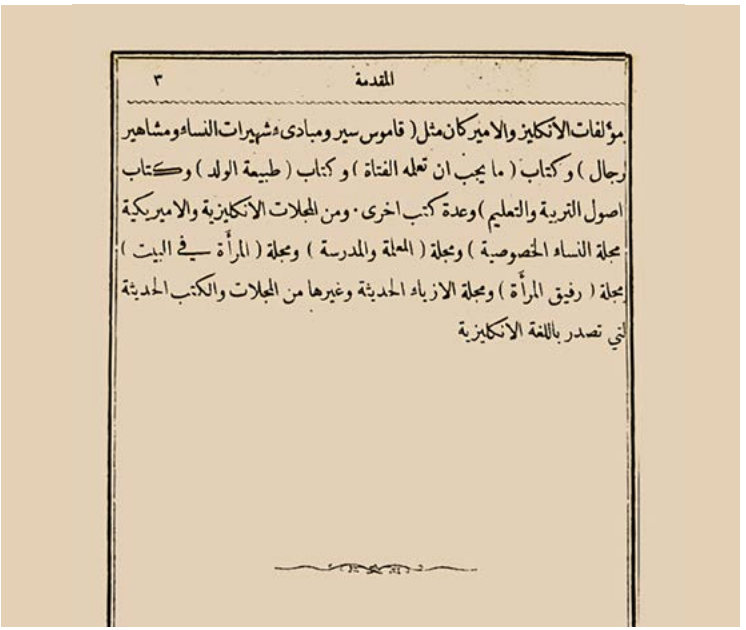
Contributors to al-Fatat included a cross-confessional group of women, including Christians, Jews, and Shiites (Booth, 1995). **Zaynab Fawwaz** mentioned above, was a contributor at al-Fatat whose writings stood out due to their distinct social analysis.

In 1910, writer **Mary Ajami** established **Al-Arous**, one of the first feminist magazines in the Arab region, to discuss women's issues in various spheres (al-Rahbi, 2014). Despite crackdowns by French authorities, Ajami and her allies circulated pamphlets covertly in Damascus (Rifai, 2022).

Picture 2
Source: JINHA Women's News Agency

Another writer and journalist considered a pioneer in the Women's Awakening was **Rose Antun Haddad** (AUB Libraries, no date). With the support of her brother Farah Antun, she launched **Majallat al-sayyidat wal banat** (The Magazine of Women and Girls) in 1903. The magazine addressed family and educational issues, promoted women's advancement outside the household, and continued until 1906 (AUB Libraries, no date).

The magazine **Fatat al-sharq** (The Girl of the East) was founded in Egypt by Lebanese author **Labiba Hashim** in 1906 and advocated for women's education and political involvement. Hashim engaged in women's rights advocacy on multiple fronts. In addition to her promotion of the press as a means to transform gender roles and social norms, she also worked with fellow activists to push for a law that provides Egyptian women with voting rights, and established a literary salon (AUB Libraries, no date). Hashim spoke on matters of positionality, arguing that men cannot comprehend women's perspectives because they do not experience life as a woman (al-Baini, 2007). Fatat al-Sharq published a monthly periodical from 1906 to 1929, although some sources date its first issue back to 1900 (CeSSRA, 2025; Hivos, no date).



Excerpt from Majallat al-sayyidāt wa-al-banāt (AUB)

Newspaper discourse in the late 1800s and early 1900s also included the contributions of writers such as **May Ziyadeh**, whose articles "evinced a deep awareness of the rights of human beings, particularly women, to freedom and justice" (al-'Id, 2008). There was also **Malaka Saad** who called for women's advancement in arts and literature. There were even woman lawyers like **Salma Abi Rashed** who also worked as a journalist and founded the monthly magazine **Fatat Lobnan** (CeSSRA).

This is not to say that women's issues were not discussed in earlier publications, such as **Majallat al-Jinnan** established in Beirut by writer and scholar **Butrus al-Bustani**. It published the contributions of poet and novelist **Maryana Marrash**, who "called upon female readers to advocate for their rights, and regularly highlighted the significance of women's education in her published works". The publication was part of the reformist project of al-Bustani, who "viewed the rise of women's role in society as instrumental to the wider project of nation-building in Syria and Lebanon" (Rifai, 2022).

It is estimated that in 1910, there was an estimated fifteen Arabic-language women's journals (Robinson, 2015). However, some of these journals were founded by men - or with men appearing prominently on the masthead, likely due to inequality in access to foundational, managerial, and visibility-related opportunities for women. Many of these closed after less than a year, often due to financial reasons (Robinson, 2015). Other women decided to leave their publications behind after emigrating, such as Mary Yanni who founded the journal Minerva in 1917 but then left it at the hands of her brother when she emigrated to Santiago, Chile in 1926.

A Diversity of Media Initiatives

The late 1800s and early 1900s also witnessed the rise of diverse forms of media beyond journalism that addressed women's rights.

These media included **novels and fiction works**, such as Labiba Hashima's novel *Qalb al-Rajol* (the heart of man), Butrus al-Bustani's *Sa'iba* in 1891, Zaynab Fawwaz's *Husn al-'awaqib aw ghada al-zahira* in 1899, Afifa Karam's *Badi'a wa Fu'ad* in 1906, Labiba Mikha'il Sawaya's *Hasna' salunik*, and others. "The intensive presence of women constituted a native incubator for ideas about women's liberation, pushing the issue into the public sphere", assert Ashour et al. (2008). Novels were a pivotal vehicle through which women's rights took root in the popular imagination.

Nonfiction books on women's rights were also published in the late 1800s. Some were authored by men, such as Muhammad ibn Mustafa ibn Khuja al-Jaza'iri's *al-iktiraj fi huquq al-inath* ("On the Rights of Women"), which was published in 1899 and advocated for greater rights for women. Notable books also include Qasim Amin's *Tahrir al-mar'a* ("Liberation of Women") in 1901.

There were also **encyclopedic** and **biographical** writings, such as Zaynab Fawwaz's biographical work on Eastern and Western Women in 1894, titled *al-durr al-manthur fi tabaqat rabbat al-khudur* (Al-Qaiwani, 2015). Fawwaz asked readers of the Beirut-based

Figure 1: Screenshot from al-Khatib of women-led magazines and journals (1984)

newspaper Lisān al-ḥāl to share their biographies as part of her biographical dictionary project, which highlights the interactive and communitarian nature of writing at the time (Booth, 1995). This was preceded by Maryam Nahhas' *ma'rid al-hasna' fi tarajim mashahir al-nisa'* in 1879, May Ziyadeh's biographies of women writers, and others. Egypt alone saw the publication of 571 biographies of women – authored by both men and women – in 18 periodicals (Ashour et al., 2008).

Speeches and **conferences** on women's rights were widespread, such as in **Julia Tu'mah Dimashqiyya**'s literary salon which was established in 1917. Many considered Dimashqiyya to be a skilled orator and journalist. 'Afifa Sa'ab (1900-1989) considered her speeches to be groundbreaking "because they emphasized a woman's autonomy from a male relative" (Robinson, 2015, pp. 46). Dimashqiyya published the monthly **al-Mar'ah al-jadīdah** (Arabic: المرأة الجديدة; "The New Woman"), the first women's magazine in Lebanon and one of the most respected magazines in the region.

The interactive experiences, debates and multimedia initiatives addressing women's rights demonstrated the existence of a vibrant "community of discourse" in Greater Syria, Egypt and the Arab region (Zachs and Halevi, 2009, pp. 628). As the international debate on women's rights was on the rise, Arab women's experiences were being localized and contextualized within this

debate (Zachs, 2018). Women organizers (hitherto prominent in media endeavors) challenged the traditional status of women in Arab societies and brought advocacy for their rights into mainstream sociopolitical discourse (Rifai, 2022).

Debates in this period were more nuanced than is often assumed today. Booth writes that pre-nineteenth century dictionaries "do not portray a world of gendered absolutes or opposites. They demonstrate that elite women were seekers and transmitters of knowledge, vocal participants in public life, and actors in the economy" (1995, pp. 129). Women's education played an important role in creating a growing class of women readers who could then participate in these debates (Robinson, 2015).

The diversity of media initiatives reflects a deep-seated desire for change amid restrictive and discriminatory social structures. By challenging dominant discourses, enriching social debates, and producing a wide array of women-centred media, women organizers and feminists in the region ushered in this community of discourse and considerably advanced questions of rights and intersectional empowerment.

The diversity of media initiatives and the creative spirit of women writers, artists and organizers highlight the localized and unique ways in which Lebanese and Arab women expressed themselves. While they were certainly participating in the rising international debates on women's rights, such historical grounding serves to debunk and challenge narratives of feminist movements being largely western imports that were alien to the Arab region. On the contrary, it is further proof that Lebanese and Arab women were pioneers in advancing women's rights and building intersectional movements within the unique mediascape in their region, across a plurality of thematic areas and philosophical approaches.

1920S AND 1930S – A PERIOD OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Context

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed a myriad of transformations in the domain of women's rights, as well as in women-led organizational endeavors. The two decades saw the establishment of a wide range of women's associations and charities, with many estimating that the first wave of the "Lebanese brand" of feminism started during the period of the Raedat ("Pioneers") in the 1920s (Stephan, 2014).

This period of organizational endeavor involved many elite women who conducted charitable and activist activities, which were associated with a more liberal inclination. This ran parallel to a significant rise in print culture and education (Stephan, 2014). Feminist cadres who established charitable organizations also advocated for women's education and participation in public life.

Women's philanthropic societies such as Sociétés des Mères, a branch of the Red Cross and the Drop of Milk organization, supported the mandate government in providing relief services and played a role in coordinating health interventions.

This was a time when feminist activity started taking a more institutional form. **The Women's Union** was established in Lebanon and Syria in 1924 (CeSSRA, 2025). In 1928, the organizational aims were highly intersectional and included unifying women-led efforts with nationalist ones. In fact, the French authorities became concerned that the union was a "stalking horse for nationalists" (Thompson, 2000, pp. 143). Internally, the union had a wide spectrum of ideological inclinations, ranging from apolitical tendencies to progressive ones.

Another important event was the Eastern Women's Congress, which was convened in Damascus in 1930, concurrent with the emergence of feminist organizers such as Nour Hamada (Kallander, 2021; Arenfeldt and Golley, 2012). The movement attempted to create multifrontal alliances, linking women's rights movements to wider agendas for social reform.

Other associations included:

- The Society for Women's Renaissance, founded in1924/5 to advocate for equality between women and men (Hivos, no date).

- The Syrian Women's Awakening Society, an elite women-led charitable organization established in 1928 and focused on improving the status of women in Syria while at the same time launching a critique of colonial actors.

Reflecting the intersectional nature of Arab women's organizing for centuries, Robinson explains that the "emphasis on social issues corresponded with a larger trend in women's organizing that emphasized women's ability to instill patriotic values in new generations" (2015, pp. 116).

Arab women proved adept at pinpointing and challenging divisive tendencies in emancipation movements, recognizing the highly intersectional nature of different struggles. They rejected a separation between their right to national liberation and their right to gender justice, actively advocating for both while also recognizing additional causes, such as broader social justice issues and economic equality.

Women-led organizations also worked to create space for themselves in international forums. Syrian and Lebanese women's rights activists were initially excluded from early conversations around international women's rights, reflecting imbalanced power dynamics on certain international forums, and both Syrian and Lebanese women were denied national and international status by the League of Nations. Arab women challenged this exclusion either by fighting to gain entry into international forums or by pushing for national independence to overcome the restrictions placed upon mandate countries (CeSSRA, 2025; Stephan, 2014).

Increasingly Intersectional Debates

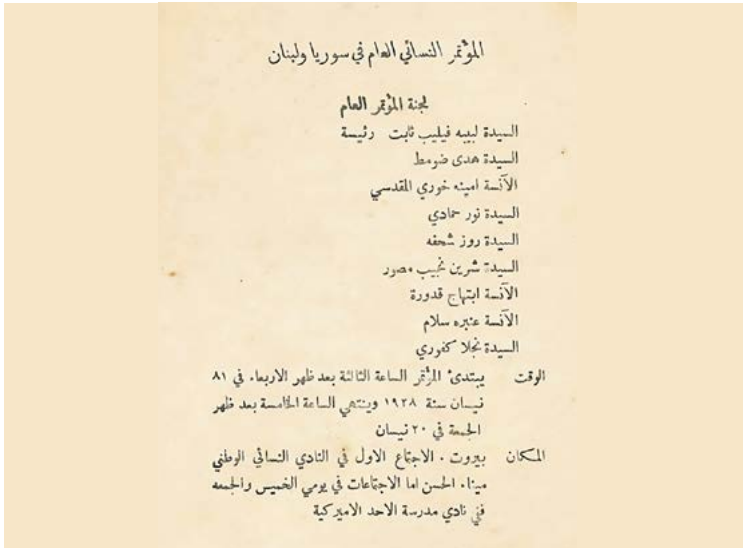
Debates around women's political rights, especially suffrage rights, were significant in the 1920s and 1930s. A significant factor was World War I, which effectively led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and stoked the fires of independence movements, which were linked by feminist actors to women's rights as connected emancipatory struggles. This link is evident in the names of new rising journals such as "*al-Mar'a al-Jadīda* (The New Woman, Beirut) , *al-Hayāt al-Jadīda* (The New Life, Paris and Beirut), [and] *al-Fajr* (The Dawn, Damascus" (Robinson, 2015, pp. 74).

Stephan (2014) highlights how by the 1920s, the "woman question" had taken on new dimensions, reflecting both national concerns for women's access to social and political rights and international concerns about gaining access to international forums. Struggles include the nomination of Nour Hamada to the League of Nations Committee on the Legal Status of Women, which was contested and resulted in a prolonged back-and-forth (Robinson, 2015).

Linking women's rights to nationalist struggles came at a risk, because the most patriotic figures at the head of the Independence movements were also traditional patriarchs. Their engagement brought debates about gender roles into the discourse on Arab identity, traditional culture and territorial integrity (Sharma, 2012). Interestingly, the concept of "male anxiety" rose during that period as women often upstaged men in nationalist struggles to defend the homeland (Sharma 2012). Examples include their role in the 1925 Syrian Revolt (largely neglected by historians) and cartoons in French and Arabic newspapers depicting a reversal in men and women's roles, signaling a supposed crisis of masculinity (Hivos, no date).

Struggles for women's education and employment were also prominent in the 1920s and 1930s. Dominant discourses, especially from the French side, discouraged women's participation in the workforce.

Some women organizers still adopted a maternalist tone, emphasizing women's ability to nurture. Such language was con-


المؤتمر النسائي العام في سوريا ولبنان

لجنة المؤتمر العام

السيدة لبيبه فيليب ثابت رئيسة
السيدة هدى ضومط
الآنسة امينه خوري المقدسي
السيدة نور حمادي
السيدة روز شحفه
السيدة شرين نجيب مصور
الآنسة ابتهاج قدورة
الآنسة عنبره سلام
السيدة نجلا كفوري

الوقت يبتدئ المؤتمر الساعة الثالثة بعد ظهر الاربعاء في ٨١ نيسان سنة ١٩٢٨ وينتهي الساعة الخامسة بعد ظهر الجمعة في ٢٠ نيسان

المكان بيروت . الاجتماع الاول في النادي النسائي الوطني مينا. الحسن اما الاجتماعات في يومي الخميس والجمعه في نادي مدرسة الاحد الاميركية

The first women's conference in Beirut, 1928 (Hivos)

sidered less threatening than explicitly confrontational political rhetoric, and was strategically adopted to foster support from male elites. The soft-touch approach was evident in the women's conference in 1928, which focused on culture rather than the right to vote, and whose delegates visited the national library and museum, but not the parliament (Thompson, 2000; Robinson, 2015; Hivos, no date).

Journal and Magazine Coverage of Women's Rights and Women-led Movements

By the 1910's, estimates indicate that 29 Arabic-language publications written by and for women had been established covering literary, educational, and scientific issues (Robinson, 2015).

Local newspapers were starting to pay attention to the activities of women's rights organizations, including **The Women's Conference** in 1928 which addressed issues of economy and industry beyond mere gender equality. The Arabic press also covered anti-mandate demonstrations led by women and initiatives such as economic boycotts of foreign goods throughout the period (Stephan, 2014).

Newspapers, both local and international, also covered Arab women's bid in entering and influencing international fora, including Hamada's candidacy to the League, with Arab press often labeling her as "the president of the Eastern Woman's Conferences" (CeSSRA, 2025).

Notable Examples

Among the journals that specifically focused on women's rights in the 1920s and 1930s, was Princess **Najlā Abī al-Lama' Ma'lūf**'s *al-Fajr* magazine, which targeted both men and women (but particularly aimed at bringing general knowledge to women) and emphasized women's contributions and achievements, in addition to inviting women readers to share their thoughts and writings. As Ma'lūf encouraged local and regional industries, she also worked with different women's associations, such as the Lebanese Women's Associations (CeSSRA, 2025; AUB Libraries, no date).

Dimashqiyyah called on women to claim their spot in the workplace, promoted independent education free from existing prejudices, and the elevation of women's literary, scientific and social roles, wrote for a number of other journals, and played an important leadership role in the Women's Association and Women's Club in Beirut alongside other notable members such as Ma'lūf, Mari Yanni and Afifa Saab (AUB Libraries, no date).

Figure 3: Profile of Julia Dimashqiyya (Forum of culture and issues of the times, 2022)

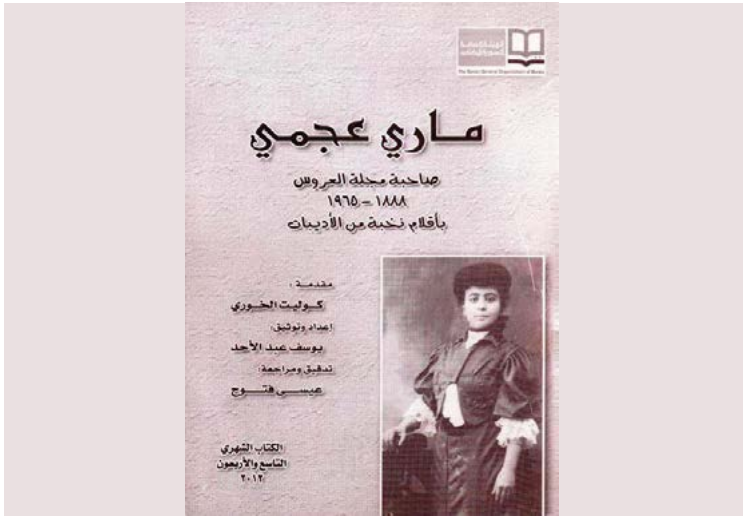


Figure 4: Profile of Mari Ajamy (Khartash, 2012)

Al-Mar'ah al-jadīdah kept the issue of suffrage alive by covering events such as a parliamentary session in 1933, which included debates on women's political rights. At the session, Deputy Sheikh Yussef al Khazin's request for women to be given voting rights was only supported by three votes (al-Khatib, 1984).

Political issues were also discussed by a range of magazines established by feminist organizers, such as **Mary Ajamy**'s Al-*Arous* which focused on suffrage rights, and **Naziq Abid**'s work that championed women's and nationalist causes (Sharma, 2012; Arenfeldt and Golley, 2012). Abid had also played a pivotal role in founding the Red Star Association, an early form of the Red Crescent Society, and played an organizational role in the Battle of Maysaloun against French forces.

Another publication discussing women's roles, achievements and rights in the Nahda era was **Mari Yanni**'s *Minerva*. The magazine showed solidarity with foreign feminist movements, such as when the June 1923 issue covered a conference discussing the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (Sharma, 2012). Yanni also contributed to a range of other magazines, such as Dimashqiyyah's al-Mar'ah al-jadīdah and Ma'luf's *al-Fajr*, and others (AUB Libraries, no date).

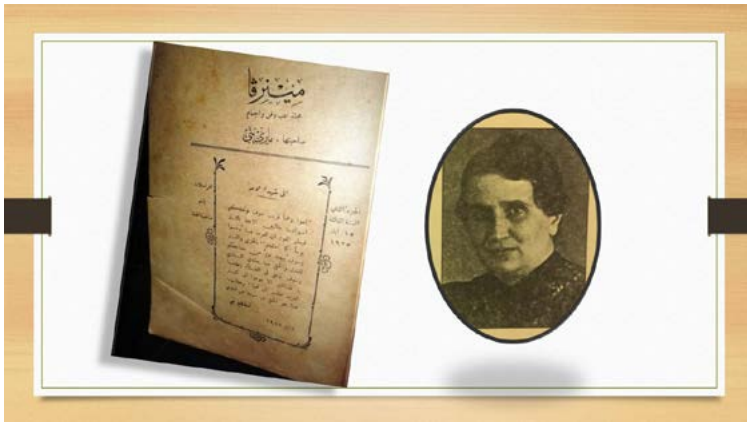


Figure 5: Mari Ajamy and an excerpt from Minerva (al-Ahmad, 2022)

Other journals were more locally rooted and targeted women from specific religious sects, such as **Afifah Saab**'s journal *al-Khidr*, established in 1919. It was part of a broader movement of women's magazines in the Shouwaifat area outside Beirut. *Al-Khidr* is regarded as the first Druze women's magazine. Saab often discussed the particular status of Druze women and their access to education education, particularly those living in rural areas (AUB Libraries, no date; CeSSRA, 2025).

Women organizers, journalists and other feminists often contributed to one another's initiatives, growing their platforms and amplifying one another's voices. These different experiences shed light on how women's rights organizers and feminists

Figure 6: Profile of Afifa Saab (Memory of the Revolution Media Documents Art, 2021)

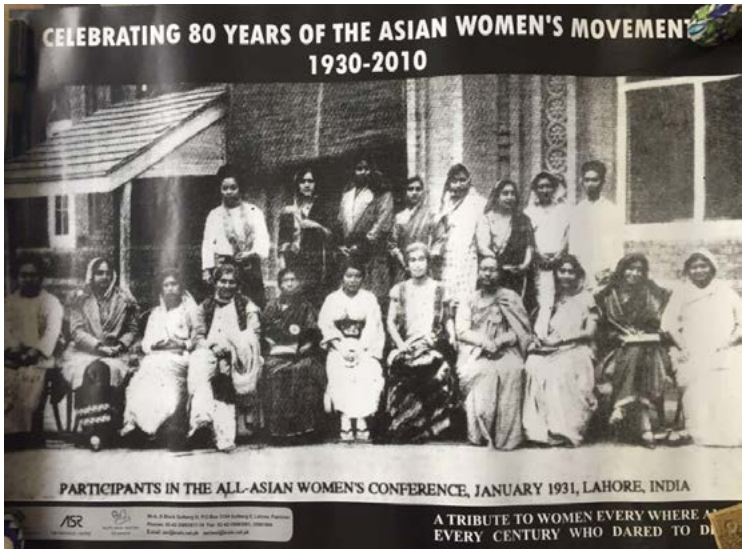


Figure 7: Participants in the all-Asian Women's Conference (Alam in Wikimedia Commons, 1931)

contributed to each other's works, wrote for their comrades' platforms, and amplified each other's voices. This allowed one's work, and consequently the wider group of feminists' work, to gain more prominence.

Conferences, Salons, Cinema and Novels Covering Women's Rights and Movements

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the proliferation of women-led **conferences** prioritizing women's rights. Among the first initiatives was the 1928 Women's Conference in Beirut, which was followed by numerous others in Beirut, Jerusalem, Damascus and other cities across the Levant.

In 1930, the first Eastern Women's Conference saw the participation of delegates from women's associations from various "Eastern" countries (an umbrella term likely referring to women from Asian countries). Participants from Syria attended to raise the issue of the future of the French mandate, with Dimashqiyyah lecturing on the ways colonial divisions had impacted feminist political endeavors (Stephan, 2014). Syrian women also helped

organize the second Eastern Women's Congress in 1932 in Tehran (Arenfeldt and Golley, 2012).

In May 1930, an issue of *l'Egyptienne* covered 'The Feminist Congress in Beirut':

> *"A large convention was held last month in Beirut. Uniting women from the Arab world…it allowed hope for greater united participation in the future…Various important issues were discussed and put up to the vote such as: women's access to art schools, the abolition of licensed brothels…the question of universal peace was also raised."*
> *(Armstrong, 2016).*

During this time, **salons** were an important venue for a "live" form of media coverage on women's rights. Salons were often managed by women who were active in other roles, such as journalism and women's associations. Discussions in the salons fostered connections between women's rights activists and women's organizations. As Robinson writes, "salons emerged as spaces to discuss further all of the dimensions of the nahḍa al-nisā'iyya (women's awakening)" (2015, pp. 74). Hostesses included Habuba Haddad, Salma Sayegh and Hajjah Fatimah al-Rifai, who opened their houses for discussions on a variety of literary, gender, and other topics (Hivos, no date).

Other forms of media covering women's rights movements faced significant challenges, particularly with regards to women's participation in the public sphere. Conservative groups opposed women's access to **cinema** and exerted pressure to both bar their entry and censor the films (Amundsen, 2005).

Marie al-Khazen expressed her ideas through **photography**, developing portraits and creative photographs that captivates viewers, many of which can still be found at the Arab Image Foundation today (De Khazen Members, 2021). Sharma asserts that al-Khazen's representation of women "encapsulates the dynamics of being a woman in a patriarchal society" (2012, pp. 15).

Protests and on-the-ground action were also a kind of performative medium by which women could raise their profile and exert

agency in regard to various sociopolitical issues (Sharma, 2012). **Leaflets** and **pamphlets**, reflecting feminist and nationalist sentiments, were also distributed in bazaars. For example, a Women's Society pamphlet from Damascus (cited in Provence, 2005, pp. 65) stated:

> *O Arabs, descendants of glorious ancestors, we appeal to you to awake in these critical times of great tragedy under the government of France. There is nothing left to us but to mount a vigorous attack and expel this government from our country.*

Educational institutions provided venues for women's participation in campus and public life. Of particular importance was the establishment of a course on journalism in 1933/1934 at the American University of Beirut and the launch of the bimonthly, illustrated, and student-run magazine al-Kulliyah Review, where women students were free to debate and explore critical issues of socio-political significance to feminism (Okkenhaug and Flaskerud, 2005).

1940S, 1950S & 1960S:
INDEPENDENCE, WORLD WAR 2 AND THE POST-WAR ERA

In 1943, women marched alongside men to demand the release of Lebanon's first president Bechara el Khoury. Presidents of the Women's Union Eveline Boustros and Ibtihaj Qaddoura led a number of demonstrations, affirming that "a woman is no longer solely for the home, because the whole world can no longer do without her services." (al-Khatib, 1984, cited in AUB Libraries, no date).

Women organizers led a number of demonstrations focused on independence from French forces, despite a lack in government support and strong backlash. These calls for independence were accompanied with calls for better access to economic and material resources for women, often in light of existing domestic duties (Robinson, 2015; Hivos, no date). Independence itself provided feminist activism with a momentum that made way for subsequent waves of feminism that incorporated context-adapting methods of influencing and organizing (CeSSRA, 2025).

During the 1940s, little has been said, especially in mainstream media, about the role that women played in Lebanon and the Arab region in times of war. But wartime engagements, as well as post-war reconstruction efforts, were important venues for women's right groups to demonstrate the link between nationalist and feminist objectives.

During WW2, women's rights movements took different directions, with four notable tracks. While some called for the recognition of the importance of women's domestic roles as a contribution to the war effort, others took a more Marxist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist inclination to achieving independence and women's rights. A third track included women focusing on specific policy issues such as women's fundamental right to education and called for higher enrolment in public schools. Finally, women's right groups were also highly visible in charity work (Robinson, 2015), as women's NGOs prioritized women's access to basic needs, especially in rural areas with limited access to resources and services (Zaatari, 2005).

The war period saw the establishment of the Arab Feminist Union (AFU) in 1944, following the Arab Feminist Congress in Cairo that same year. The Union aimed to advance women's political, legal and economic rights in Arabic-speaking countries (Najjar, 2020). In Lebanon, the Lebanese Arab Women Federation was founded to promote the same agenda at the national level (Armstrong, 2016).

In 1952, the Lebanese Women Union and the Christian Women's Solidarity Association merged to form the Lebanese Council of Women, bringing together women across different sects with the organization firmly advocating for Palestinian liberation in 1948. While the organization retained some elitist inclinations, there were also important efforts by working-class women labor activists (Schubert, 2020).

However, these groups started to fall out of favor during post-war national-level political negotiations, including on a regional level. For example, the Arab Feminist Union, an umbrella of feminist associations from across Arab countries, was excluded altogether from the negotiations that preceded the founding of the Arab League in 1945.

Nonetheless, the post-war period was significant for women's rights legislation in Lebanon. Women secured the universal right to vote in 1953. Beforehand, President Camille Chamoun had issued decrees limiting voting rights and eligibility for public office to women educated at the primary level or holding equivalent certificates.

The post-war period also saw cultural endeavors by women in various media, including theatre. **Nidal al-Ashkar** is largely credited for the development of theatre in Beirut, whereas new theater venues were established such as Masrah al-Madina and Mohtaraf Beirut lil Masrah (Hivos, no date). This period of time also witnessed the publishing of several novels and short stories by women writers (Aghacy, 2001).

The 1950s witnessed the first women to run for parliamentary seats. Feminist, poet and literary writer **Emily Fares Ibrahim** was the first woman to run for parliament in Lebanon in 1953.


النهار

خفض عدد النواب الى ٤٤ واقتراح انشاء «مجلس اعلى»

تقسيم لبنان الى ٣٣ دائرة انتخابية منها ٢٣ دائرة فردية

الجمهوريون يتفوقون على الديمقراطيين بينما يتعادل الحزبان في مجلس الشيوخ

ايزنهاور يبلغ الرئيس ترومن عن استعد

صحيفة بريطانية تعلن ان نجاح ايزنهاور نشر الر

جدول خاص بالمرسوم الاشتراعي رقم ٦

مرض فاشنس مدير شركة الكهرباء فتأخرت دروس اللجنة الحكومية

المرأة تعرض قضيتها في حفل خطابي تذيع في شخص رئيس الوزراء نجيب أربحاً

Figure 8: Excerpt from al-Nahar, 1952 (Hivos).

Figure 9: Excerpt from al-Nahar, 1952 (Hivos).


النهار

البعث يعتبر الدستور الاتحادي إنتصاراً له

البيطار: علينا أن نبدأ حالاً "مرحلة التطبيق"

السعدي: سنتمسك بحرفية الدستور عند التنفيذ

نعم... مع الوحدة!

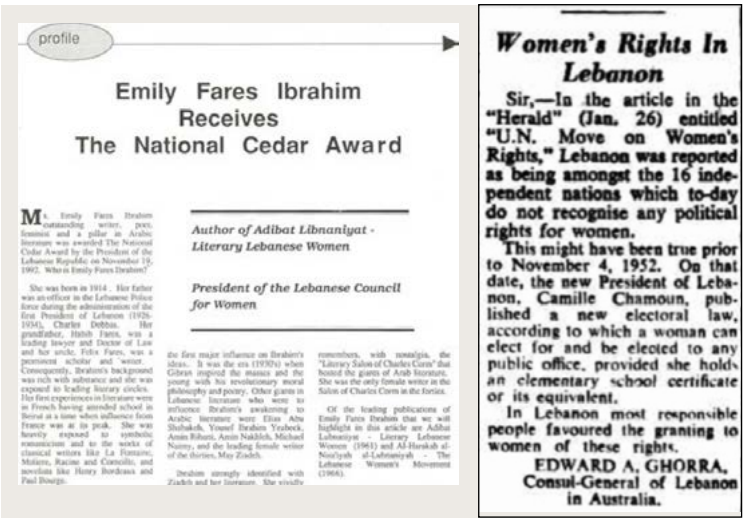
حيضر يستقيل من أمانة المكتب السياسي حالياً بدور اكبر في القضايا الأساسية

قاتل الأمير السعودي يروي الأسباب للبوليس

Figure 10: Excerpt from al-Nahar, 1963 (Hivos).

In the 25 years that followed, eight women ran for office (Hivos, no date), with the first woman parliamentarian, Myrna Boustany, being elected in 1963 (Hivos, no date).

Finally, the war and post-war periods witnessed a number of on-the-ground women initiatives, with several protests noted and covered throughout. Examples include the strike of Lebanese feminists in 1946 to force French forces to leave (Perkins, 2016) and the Regie Libanaise des Tabacs et Tombacs strikes in 1944 and 1945 by a number of Lebanese women and men, as well as the Regie's major strike in 1946. In 1951, women organized massive demonstrations in demand for political rights, followed


profile

Emily Fares Ibrahim Receives The National Cedar Award

Author of Adibat Libnaniyat - Literary Lebanese Women

President of the Lebanese Council for Women

Women's Rights In Lebanon

Sir,—In the article in the "Herald" (Jan. 26) entitled "U.N. Move on Women's Rights," Lebanon was reported as being amongst the 16 independent nations which to-day do not recognise any political rights for women.

This might have been true prior to November 4, 1952. On that date, the new President of Lebanon, Camille Chamoun, published a new electoral law, according to which a woman can elect for and be elected to any public office, provided she holds an elementary school certificate or its equivalent.

In Lebanon most responsible people favoured the granting to women of these rights.

EDWARD A. GHORRA, Consul-General of Lebanon in Australia.

Figure 11 (left): Excerpt from al-Raida journal (al-Raida).

Figure 12 (right): Excerpt from the Sydney Morning Herald, 1953 (Trove)

in 1952 by the Roxy Movie Theatre Demonstration for suffrage rights (Hivos, no date). The movements were featured on various news platforms, some of which are depicted below.


الديار

اصطدام دام بين عمال الريجي ورجال الدرك

يؤدي الى مصرع فتاة في الثامنة عشرة من عمرها

ووقوع ١٣ جريحاً وجريحة اثنتان منهن بحالة خطرة

هل توصل الرئيس الخوري لاتفاق على مسألة الاسكندرونه

Figure 14: Excerpt from al-Diyar, 1946 (Hivos).


From Loom to Puff | 21

ثمن العدد ٥ غروش

العدد ١٠ السنة الاولى

الأحرار المصوّرة

الاثنين ١٥ آذار

اسبوعية . ادبية . انتقادية . فكاهية . روائية

اخطبوط الريجي يلتف على السكاير

2. The Octopus Régie. *Al-Ahrar al-Musawwara*, a weekly magazine, published this caricature reflecting the apprehension that started to grow against the Régie in French Lebanon and Syria. An octopus, in this case the Régie, tightly surrounds the Syrian-Lebanese major cities (Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Tripoli, Latakia, and Beirut), implying the stifling of their economic freedom. *Al-Ahrar al-Musawwara* 1, no. 10 (Mar. 15, 1926), 1. Reproduced by Katrin Dinkel.

Figure 13: Excerpt from al-Ahrar al-Musawwara (Hivos).


وفد الجمعات النسائية الطرابلسية ، الذي زار عاطف الشهال عجاً لدى الحكومة على اغفال حقوق المرأة السياسية
وقد بدت في الصف الاول رئيسات الجمعيات النسائية في طرابلس

الشرق ٢٤ / اذار / ١٩٥٢

Figure 15: Excerpt from al-Sharq, 1952 (Hivos).


المستقبل ٢٤ اذار ١٩٥٢

تظاهرات نسائية تعم لبنانه

كانت لجنة التشريع البرلمانية اقترحت ان تمنح المرأة اللبنانية حقوقها السياسية تدريجيا حيث تبدأ بالتصويت في انتخابات البلديه ولما كانت مطالب المرأة تشمل حقوقها السياسية كاملة بلا قيد ولا شرط فقد قوبل هذا الاقتراح في الاوساط النسائية بالاحتجاج الشديد واقيمت تظاهرة نسائية اشترك فيها نحو من ٣٠٠ سيدة وآنسة ، وتوجهوا كهن الى دار البرلمان حيث قابل وفد منهن عطوفة رئيس المجلس وسلمه عريضة لجنة المنظمات النسائية وهي تتضمن الاحتجاج على اقتراح اللجنة وتكرار المطالبة بالحقوق السياسية كاملة

— تبذل مساع جدية بعد مأساة البارك

Figure 16: Excerpt from al-Mustaqbal (Hivos).

News and Magazine Coverage

Newspaper coverage during the World War II period was affected by wartime rationing, including shortages in commodities such as paper. Women's rights were less thoroughly covered during this period, with notably low attention to working women's mobilization efforts. There was a common assumption that syndicate members were men, invisibilizing women's participation (Hivos, no date).

Women's journals did manage some modest coverage and helped to foster the formation of a pan-Arab women's movement (Robinson, 2015). The Arab Women's Conference in Cairo in 1944 was covered by a number of different newspapers, such as Filistīn, Palestine Post, and an English daily. Press coverage of the conference was mostly favorable. Prior to the conference, Syrian and Lebanese organizations added "Arab" to their names as the conference sought Arab unity. They asserted support to national causes even ahead of women's rights, showing that women were a crucial base of nationalist action.

Robinson (2015) also highlights the work of women such as Zahiyah Doughan, who advocated for writing Arab women's histories, and other delegates who raised questions of women's

access to social and economic domains. The conference passed fifty-one resolutions targeted at both Arab governments and international actors.

Notable examples of works covering women's rights include the work of **Rose Attallah Shahfah**, who wrote for magazines such as **al-Arous** and **Sout al-Maraa**, a weekly magazine specializing in women's affairs. She also authored a number of books and led several women's organizations in Syria and Lebanon (Hivos, no date). **Edvick Jureidini Shayhoub** became Sout al-Maraa's editor-in-chief in 1951, and wrote for women as her target audience. The 1960s also saw the launching of **Donia al-Maraa** by **Noura Nowayhed Halawani**, a regionally popular magazine focused on various women's issues and addressing a range of sociopolitical matters (Hivos, no date).

Alice Kandaleft Cosma is another feminist whose work was notably covered by press materials. She was the first Syrian Government appointee to the UN Commission on the Status of Women. International audiences reading about her speeches expressed curiosity about the status of women in the Arab world. But news coverage rarely touched upon the content of her speeches, such as her vision for advancing women's rights within the pursuit of Arab independence (Robinson, 2015).

Some women writers received considerable attention by scholars during the post-war period, but this was not the case for **Laylá Ba'albakī**. According to Igbaria (2015), her opposition to patriarchy made her a target of criticism. She addressed various taboo topics and challenged patriarchal perspectives on society. These include normative understandings of women's need for men, the ownership of their bodies, and expectations for maternity and child-bearing.

1970S AND 1980S: THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

Context

Before the Civil War in 1975, Lebanon offered a level of cultural openness and freedom of expression that was unique in the region, with Beirut serving as the region's media hub (Trombetta, 2018). Girls enjoyed relatively good access to education and constituted about 44.9% of students enrolled in private schools (al-Raida). . However, the start of the Civil War had profound impacts on the progress that had been made for women and girls.


المستقبل

تدشين الصحافة والمطار برعاية صاحب الفخامة

المرأة اللبنانية تطالب بحقوقها الكاملة

من أين لك هذا ..!

وقاربنا ايضا ...!

Figure 17: Excerpt from al-Mustaqbal newspaper, 1949 (Hivos)

While some have argued that the Lebanese Civil War was a not a "women's war", research and media on women's involvement suggests otherwise. In fact, many women insisted on being involved (al-Raida).

Women's participation was not uniform and included both anti-war organizing and military support to their respective factions. Women's participation in militia action varied according to the organization and mode of operation of the militia of their respective party (Soulié-Caraguel, 2021). The notion that women are more inclined towards peace while men are more inclined toward violence was also challenged during the Civil War, as women performed many military roles, even if they went largely unrecognized (ILO, 1997).

Despite their important contributions and active engagement, women were often excluded from decision-making processes during both wartime and post-war peace negotiations. The Civil War generally marginalized "women's position as women" through the disruption of the existing progressive social order and the promotion of a "stronger adherence to family and tradition". Male leaders diverted attention away from women's rights and women's activities, except when it suited their traditional view as peacekeepers at demonstrations or sit-ins (Khatib, 2008).

Anti-War Efforts

Anti-war organizing took on various forms throughout the civil war years. The journal al-Raida covered a silent protest in 1983 that saw the participation of 400 women in front of a UNICEF building, with the protest being considered "the first documented instance of a peace movement by Lebanese women" (Aboul-Hosn, 2015).

In the village of Baakleen in 1980, a small group of women formed the Women's Edification Assembly to address issues of security and stability. They organized cultural activities such as theatrical performances and poetry evenings, with the aim of providing "a stability which patriarchal institutions that dominated the country were not providing" and building "women's solidarity" (Ward, 2009).

The assembly also established a magazine titled **Abeer** that promoted their activities and served as a forum for women to express their opinions and vent. The assembly saw the participation of women from different sects – despite the sectarian divisions that defined the conflict – and was considered an attempt to stabilize and normalize life for children (Ward, 2009).

Anti-war efforts by women included marches throughout the 1970s and 1980s that were suppressed by men invested in ongoing power conflicts (Fernea, 1989). They also included a non-violent movement comprised of protests, petitions, forums, and calls by actors such as Laure Moghaizel for women to intervene not only through their care work, but also by asserting their right to "enter contentious politics and make their voices heard" in order to stop the bloodshed (Kurtz and Kurtz, 2015, pp. 287).

Increased Responsibilities

NGOs and women's organizations had increased responsibilities and pressures during the war, which had forced women to undertake employment outside the household in addition to their traditional domestic responsibilities; the latter work often went unacknowledged.

Such work included responding to the immediate needs of war-affected populations such as displaced people, widows, war orphans and the disabled (ILO, 1997). For many women's organizations, the struggle for their civil rights was temporarily subordinated to other wartime priorities like the provision of welfare services (Aboul-Hosn, 2015).

Women were active in various organizations that directly participated in the fighting, including traditional militias as well as left-wing groups more focused on political economy discussions (Ribas-Mateos, 2019). However, that didn't stop women from pursuing a feminist agenda that included calls for women's socio-political integration. In 1983, a Lebanese Women's Council conference called for eliminating discrimination against women and implementing a plan for peace and national unity. There is a lack of evidence about the reactions to the conference, though "it was likely ignored, mocked, or denigrated by much of the rest of the

Lebanese media as most feminist activism in Lebanon has been and continues to be" (Whetstone, 2013, pp. 66).

Female participation in the civil war was facilitated by societal and attitudinal changes towards women during the pre-war period, but traditional gender norms and patriarchal expectations were again re-amplified during the war (Eggert, 2021). Attempts by women to expand their rights were often met with guilt tripping, including from fellow women and "motherists", a concept elaborated on below (Whetsone, 2013; Eggert, 2021).

Women and People with Disabilities

Scholarship has shed light on the previously neglected experiences of women with disabilities (Wehbi, 2010). The 1980s saw a shift in Lebanese policy for people with disabilities from a medical-technical focus on care and rehabilitation toward a rights-based approach. This was spearheaded by the efforts of various organizations founded to support people with disabilities. These organizations ushered a new rights-based discourse and played a significant role in anti-violence movements, organizing marches in 1985 and 1987, and camps and seminars promoting disability and human rights and encouraging other civil society organizations' protest endeavors (Kabbara, 2012).

Debates and Media on Women's Rights

What is commonly referred to as the second cycle of feminism is usually associated with the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War. With the rise of leftist inclinations and anti-establishmentarian thinking, feminist organizations had new allies like the Organization of Communist Action and were able to pursue their agendas more autonomously (Stephan, 2014; CeSSRA, 2025).

During this period, the debate on women's rights, particularly in "third world" countries, became increasingly central in international fora. For example, the United Nation's first World Conference on Women held in 1975 in Mexico City tackled contentious themes like "neo-colonialism" that reflected the concerns of women in the Global South (CeSSRA, 2025) and was dubbed

during its coverage as "the greatest consciousness-raising event in history" (Olcott, 2017).

The common cause of women's rights was not a major priority in mainstream media during the Civil War (Aboul-Hosn, 2015). Nonetheless, there were notable women-led efforts focused on peacebuilding. For example, kindergarten teacher Iman Khalifeh initiated the Peace Movement in Lebanon. Other feminist organizers, youth initiators, and disabled people's organizations promoted calls for peace, but these efforts lost momentum with time (Aboul-Hosn, 2015).

Women's efforts largely addressed war-related apathy and indifference among conflicting sides, while Palestinian women such as Sahar Khalifa and Raimonda Tawil critiqued men's ways of fighting (Cooke in Golley, 2007).

Feminist perspectives cast the war as a double burden on women, both in the domestic and the wider social spheres. In the political sphere, men occupied most leadership roles, while women were relegated to more subordinate and non-proactive roles (al-Ajeel, 2023). Feminists also argued that their efforts were diminished by more survivalist perspectives during the war, concealing political and social consciousness (Khatib, 2008).

On the other hand, women's participation in the workforce became more prominent during the war, with vocal uprisings such as that of the Beirut Decentrists (al-Raida). Efforts to historicize women's realities during the war were limited by the central government's collapse and the lack of archival material during the war (Ragin, 2020).

The Beirut Decentrists

Among notable artistic efforts that emerged during the civil war period was the movement that Mariam Cooke (1987) coined "the Beirut Decentrists".

The Decentrists, a cohort of at least 40 women, published novels, poetry, and short stories that addressed issues of identity, women's rights, and women's experiences. These stories often

included the experiences of women during the war, whose husbands and male relatives had fled the country for a variety of excuses, highlighting a binary of "women's steadfastness" versus "men's cowardly vacillation" (Cooke, 1987, pp. 56).

The Decentrists' were mostly middle- to upper-middle-class women from different linguistic backgrounds, confessions and persuasions. They offered new perspectives on the war and discussed the more emotional aspects of the war experience, whereas men's writing often focused on more objectivist forms of description. Čižmíková writes that the "very fact of these women having been located at the margins gave them a certain 'epistemic privilege' that pertains to the position of marginalized subjects as subjects possessing an alternative and more critical optics with a sharper, keener eye that enables them to notice what escapes the view 'from the centre'" (2012, pp. 151-152).

Their writing focused on everyday realities, familial dynamics, and oppressive aspects of patriarchal control and linked them to the very onset of the civil war, including the peculiarities of day-to-day domestic and logistical tasks. There is a recurrent theme of alienation from one's environment and society. Čižmíková identifies feelings that "official mainstream narrative of war, in which an 'ex post facto' memory is imposed upon individual members of society by the state, tries to obliterate real memory by 'creating an alienated, abstract version' – a new memory where 'no legitimacy is given to validating loss'" (pp. 154).

The Decentrists "relayed the experience of consciousness of survival and described the war and their society through their own lenses" (Azar, 2018, pp. 86-87), offering a daily perspective on the war in contrast to men's battle-focused narratives, and asserting an evolution from passivity to action, thus being decentered on both physical and intellectual levels (Azar, 2018).

Miriam Cooke's book on the Beirut Decentrists is considered a classic, a rare monograph about modern Arab women writers, applying contemporary feminist literary theories and centralizing women's largely neglected perspectives on developments (Guth, 1994).

In a region of recurrent conflicts and crises and the dominance of grandiose black-and-white narratives, the experience of the Decentrists inspires writers across the Arab world to go beyond reductive views of sociopolitical issues. By recognizing the daily intricacies and realities of different social groups, one gains a more informed view on the nuances of living through crisis periods.

The experience of the Decentrists can be inspirational for the state of affairs in Lebanon and the Arab region today. As marginalized communities suffer disproportionately during periods of shock, bringing in a more inclusive approach to narrative-building becomes crucial. It challenges the dominant trend of putting dominant figures, usually men, on a pedestal and providing them with savior status. It provides an in-depth appreciation of the sacrifices that different social groups contribute to mitigate and resolve crisis situations and the different forms of harm that each social group uniquely suffers from. It remains an inclusive lens that remains absent in dominant political circles in Lebanon and the Arab region.

Press Coverage

Press coverage throughout the civil war included coverage of women militia members and women's organizational efforts, which comprised a range of different activities, including journalistic ones. Nidaa al-Mara'a, for example, was a weekly in the al-Nidaa newspaper addressing a range of social, political and cultural issues pertaining to women.

However, throughout the war, women had limited access to mainstream media outlets. Activist Marie Debs, for example, could only recall one instance where her organization was able to successfully reach a newspaper to discuss ideas related to women and peace (El Masri, 2017). Other examples include the establishment of the **Abeer** magazine by the Women's Edification Assembly. Malika Hamadeh took on the chief editorial role and led the organization's coverage of a wide range of women's issues (Ward, 2009).

Women in the Fighting

Coverage of the inclusion of women in informal armed groups has been largely associated to the media attention that such women gather, reportedly receiving around eight times the media coverage of their male counterparts (Eggert, 2017) in what is called the "CNN factor" (Ali, 2005).

Including women militia members was sometimes a strategy to grab the attention of national and international audiences. It was used to promote ideas that militias such as Kataeb are "modern" because they include women in the fight, despite the persistence of patriarchal hierarchies and conservative structures within these groups (Eggert, 2017).

Palestinian women were portrayed by Fida'i narratives as being heroines of steadfastness; they were largely celebrated both in media and in official documents (El Masri, 2013).

Al-Raida

Al-Raida journal served as a newsletter and archive for many writings and accounts on women's histories of activism and organizational endeavor. The journal was originally published in English and in Arabic to reach wider audiences on a local and international level (Kurtz and Kurtz, 2015). Its editor Rose Ghurayyib discussed then-taboo topics on family planning and contraception, and hosted editorials by feminist activists during the civil war years (Khoury, 2020). The journal also took initiative to present feminist oral histories.

Al-Raida published testimonies and narratives of people opposed to the war, as well as arguments for the inclusion of women in peace processes. The journal documented the peace movement in Lebanon and discussed how "gender identity became contested and transformed within the framework of war and violence" (Kurtz and Kurz, 2015, pp. 285).

Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, there was significant coverage of women's employment on television and in newspapers. Women's work was promoted under various rationales,


of *Al-Raida*, we are proud to present the recollections, views and suggestions of several heroines of the Lebanese civil war. These dynamic, resourceful and courageous women, who are but a representative sample of a much larger group, have a great deal to offer to Lebanese society as it emerges from a long nightmare of death and destruction. These women may also have much to impart to the women who are now picking up the

Adnan, and *The Foreman's Fortress*, by Layla Usayran for examples of literature by the Beirut Decentrists.

(2) Miriam Cooke (1987) *Women Write War: The Centering of the Beirut Decentrists*. Oxford: Center for Lebanese Studies.

Photograph by Hayat Karanouh

AL-RAIDA Vol. XII Nos. 70 & 71 Summer & Fall 1995 13 AL-RAIDA Vol. XII Nos. 70 & 71 Summer & Fall 1995

Figure 18: Excerpt from al-Raida journal (al-Raida)


Editorial

Rosemary Sayigh*

Women in Lebanon Tell Their Lives

Introduction: Oral History

Oral history as research approach emerges partly from nineteenth century European romantic nationalism, with its enthusiasm for folk-lore and folk-narrative, partly from journalistic investigation into social conditions, for instance Mayhew's study of the London poor (1861) or, much later, the radio journalist Studs Terkel's classic study of the Great Depression (1970). Another contributory influence was the turn taken by historians towards material conditions, social relations, culture and 'mentalities'. Ironically, anthropology contributed little to oral history in spite of its primary focus on pre-literate peoples. This was because anthropologists like Malinowski believed that 'primitive' peoples either had no history, or did not know it.[1]

Paul Thompson in his introductory book on oral history explains why most historians reacted with distrust to a method associated from its beginnings with the desire to record - hence implicitly to change - marginality.[2]

curricula in the Arab world. Several factors may explain this strange omission: most Arab universities are state-controlled, with social study curricula built on 'classic' Western texts, with little attention to recent critical trends. In courses on methodology, the survey is dominant. Critiques of Western epistemology such as those made in Subaltern Studies are not to be found on Arab university reading lists. It may also be that the hierarchy of the written over the oral may be stronger in the Arab region than in, say, India which also possesses both literate and oral traditions. How otherwise explain the neglect of orality by social scientists in the Arab region? In spite of an enormously rich verbal culture, we find no teaching or research in sociolinguistics, little research focussed on everyday speech, few folklore studies, and almost no life story recording.[3]

The particular relevance of oral history for Al-Raida is that

Figure 19: Excerpt from al-Raida journal (al-Raida).

such as "modernity, financial need, and economic empowerment toward emancipation" (Zaatari, 2006, pp. 42).

Literary Writings and Other Media

The civil war period witnessed the proliferation of various kinds of literary works, particularly novels. As Čižmíková (2012) explains, women's writings expressed fresh viewpoints among a landscape of established narratives.

In fact, ample literature examining the civil war period often classifies the writings of women above those of men. According to Čižmíková (2012, pp. 150), it is "to these Lebanese women that the Arabic literature is indebted for" a 'radical break with tradition'". "They established the model of an activist literature which questions the patriarchal values of the Lebanese, and by extension Arab society, and calls for fundamental change". (Čižmíková, 2012, pp. 150). As reported by the New York Times, a poem by kindergarten teacher Iman Khalifeh which received international mention "stirred" Beirut plans for protest (Aboul-Hosn, 2015).

> "*With their pens, Lebanese women were fighting the civil war (1975-92) in the hope of bringing about peace through reason and art*" (Cooke in Golley, 2007, pp. 15).

Novels

Novels such as Iman Humaydan Younes' paved the way for feminist challenges to traditional gender roles in Lebanon (Azar, 2018). Others, such as Ghada al-Samman's Beirut, Hoda Barakat's The Stone of Laughter and Hanan al-Shaykh's The Story of Zahra challenge gendered conceptualizations of nationalism. Barakat's novel was the first modern Arabic one to feature a gay protagonist. It provides a critique of both masculinity and some perspectives on martyrdom (al-Raida).

Literature characterizes al-Shaykh's novel as functioning "within an ideological field that recycles stereotypes and tropes about Arab women" (Hartman, 2020, pp. 83). Al-Shaykh's novel was featured in the first International Feminist Bookfair in London in 1986 as it garnered considerable critical acclaim (Cooke in Golley, 2007).

The four authors conveyed the war's senselessness but also described the sense of everyday normalcy that characterized much of the Civil War (Biglin, 2013). Writers used different languages in their writings and addressed matters of violence, war trauma and gender relations (Rebeiz, 2022). Writer Nada Awar Jarrar and others addressed hidden moods of war, going beyond masculine pure war narratives to discuss women's personal lives, inner struggles and experiences (Gamal el-Din, 2018; Curry, 2021).

Cinema

Women's role during the war was largely ignored by mainstream Lebanese cinema and films, which often presented it as a masculine domain and relegated women to the position of victims or omitted them. When Khatib (2006) asked Borhan Alawiyeh, the director of the film Letter from a Time of Exile about the omission of women in movies, his reply was "that he could not imagine the experience of women" (pp. 65).

> *"Lebanese cinema has largely ignored the role of women as ['active agents'] in the civil war, presenting them ['as passive and silent beings"]"* (Hout, 2016, pp. 487).

On the other hand, films like West Beirut and A Civilized People focused on "mediating the experiences of women trying to cope with 'ordinary' life in wartime" (Khatib, 2006, pp. 69). These films challenged dominant discourses that blame the war on an "undefined other" and depicted women in ways that neither essentialized nor idealized them.

Khatib asserts that it is "the women's voices that make the films an important constituent in the process of creating a much-needed national discourse in Lebanon" (2006, pp. 76).

1990s: Post-War

While the war had numerous effects on women's participation in the workforce and other social spheres, women were found to be excluded and marginalized in varying ways during the post-war years. A UNICEF report in 1995 described various forms of legal, political, cultural and economic discrimination against women in Lebanon (Khatib, 2008).

After the war, many donor agencies and non-governmental organizations invested in women's economic empowerment in Lebanon. Much of the focus was on entrepreneurship, with a surge in microfinance interventions. However, many initiatives treated women as passive recipients of assistance rather than political actors who could be empowered to organize and advocate for their rights (Abdo and Kerbage, 2012).

At the international level, there were various advances in women's rights in the 1990s, with some Lebanese involvement. The Beijing conference in 1995 gave momentum to women's organizations and debates on gender equality, and saw the formation of women's advancement committees. The conference also played a role in Lebanon's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the creation of a National Women's Commission (International Labour Organization, 1997). However, women in post-war Lebanon remained excluded from most decision-making positions (al-Raida).

Organizations that served people with disabilities developed new strategies during the post-war period which focused on lobbying for a disability law and maintaining the status of the disability movement "as an avant garde social force working to strengthen social peace and reconciliation in the country and to push for reform" (Kabbara, 2012, pp. 34). Realities today, however, are constrained for disabled people's organizations as they are faced with a myriad of political issues constraining the margin of adequacy of pro-disabled people policies and an overall civil society discourse that excludes disabled people to a large degree (Kabbara, 2012).

Queer people had a different experience during the war, as homosexuality was and remains taboo in the country. The only silver lining of the war period was that it diverted the attention of police away from harassing LGBTQ+ people. After the war, media coverage of queer people in popular magazine and TV shows was often characterized by mockery. Halwani (2002) gives the example of an article on lesbians by the magazine Apostrophe, wherein the writers gave the impression that they were genuinely interested in discussing homosexuality and lesbian realities, but ran the piece in a special issue subtitled "Men", mockingly referring to lesbians as men.

THE EARLY 2020S (UNTIL 2022)

The 2000s were a period of heightened political turbulence and instability in Lebanon. Notable events included the 2000 liberation of the South, the 2005 Independence Revolution, the 2006 war, the internal conflict of 2008, and the pro-change movements of 2011, 2015 and 2019.

Women's involvement in popular movements, particularly pro-change protests, had become more and more apparent, and their contributions were more widely acknowledged.

Stephan (2010a) argues that during the March 2005 demonstrations, women became more widely acknowledged as politically active citizens, with much more room for engagement in contentious politics. Their role was not limited to being participants on the side or playing a supportive role, and women played an important part in planning protests and movement activities. They also organized their own demonstrations, bringing a "feminine" element to resistance (Stephan, 2010a).

The central role that women played in the 2005 revolution was considered central and contributed to the evolution of gender standards in Lebanon (Stephan, 2017). On Mother's Day that year, Leila Saad called on all Lebanese mothers to join in collective prayer at 12:55 pm, the time of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's assassination (Kurtz and Kurtz, 2015).

Women's contributions to the resistance against Syrian occupation through nonviolent resistance brought a feminist dimension to the struggle. They successfully articulated interconnectedness of gender equality, violence, contentious politics, democracy, and peace building (Kurtz and Kurtz, 2015).

Women organizers such as Asma Andraos and Nora Jumblatt were important actors in the 2005 revolution. Despite their affiliations to patriarchal and conservative parties, they demonstrated the impactful roles that women could play in protest. They also ensured that there was sufficient media coverage of the protests, such as Jumblatt's coordination with al-Nahar newspaper to stealthily transport protest material in the newspaper's truck (Stephan, 2010b). While women took on a more prominent role during protests, some elements of women's participation were distinctly elitist. Class-based critiques of women's participation highlighted the number of Louis Vuitton purses and Gucci backpacks among women during the demonstrations (Stephan, 2010).

Women's rights organizations also showed notable levels of organizational flexibility. During the 2006 Israeli occupation and war, organizations such as the Collective for Research & Training on Development - Action had to divert their resources and attention from their usual work on gender equality and social justice to instead contribute to emergency and relief operations and the monitoring of shelters for internally displaced people (Abou-Habib, 2006).

Newsroom Dynamics

The internal workings and organization of journalistic newsrooms are important to understand dynamics behind certain coverage choices. It's important to begin by acknowledging that mainstream media TV companies are heavily impacted by the sectarian character of the country's sociopolitical structure, thus rendering mainstream media to a large extent influenced by elitist and sectarian political interests.

The absence or inadequacy of professional unions for press and broadcast journalists further hinders media freedom (Mady, 2015).

An International Women's Media Foundation report in 2011 found that the ratio of employment in news companies was more than 2:1 in favor of men, with matters even more accentuated in governance and top-level management levels (IWMF, 2011).

Indeed, generations of "Arab women journalists and activists are among the neglected historical forces" in Arab television's development (Sakr, 2007 in Mady, 2015, pp. 41). Research on women

in media, however, remains relatively rudimentary, with some attributing rising rates of women in media to societal and cultural developments (Mady, 2015).

There is rampant discrimination and inequality within television-based newsrooms. A study from 2000 found that women occupy about 18% of top-ranking positions, which are relatively monopolized by men, despite the fact that 85% of journalism and communication students are women (Mady, 2015). Mady also adds factors such as the lack of gender-sensitive provisions and sexual harassment-tackling laws in the Lebanese press syndicate's codes of professional conduct.

However, Mady (2015) notes many significant advances in women's access to previously male-dominated spaces. Arab women journalists opened new discursive spaces and women proved to be successful journalists in times of both war and peace. Moreover, Mady's primary research shows that a woman's role in the media field was believed to be "as appreciated as that of a man" (pp. 181), and that appreciation is focused on character more than anything else. The study also found that women respondents believe that "women can occupy the same positions as men in the Lebanese television newsroom" (pp. 199), that women formed a majority of newsroom employees, that most respondents found that "management opportunities were equal for both men and women" (pp. 201), and that "recognition was not gender sensitive" (pp. 211). Most respondents in Mady's research also rejected the notion that Lebanese newsrooms function like "old boys' clubs". The research claimed that the division of story assignments is not as gendered in the Lebanese newsroom as in other contexts, where women cover light news while men cover hard news. In Lebanon, women are at the forefront of hotspot coverage. The main problem is that women are underrepresented in top management positions, despite changes in hiring practices and increasing numbers of women occupying middle-level and senior management positions.

A Decade of Organizations and Demonstrations

Coverage of women's rights and feminist movements in the Arab world and in Lebanon in particular significantly increased during the last decades, as women were playing increasingly central roles to a series of movements, starting from 2005 and going through the 2010s such as in the 2011 anti-sectarian protests, the 2015 garbage protests and the 2019 uprising.

Local and International Coverage

Feminist organizers' involvement in events such as the 2019 Lebanese protest movement was well covered in local, regional and international media. Headlines in newspapers, blogs, and journals clearly convey the role that women, queer and feminist organizers played in the movement (see annex for samples).

Local coverage of the role played by feminist organizers' – as well as various marginalized groups – was largely restricted to alternative platforms like Beirut Today, Megaphone, and al-Modon, whereas mainstream media tended to provide more conventional, non-gender sensitive coverage of the events.

Articles in the alternative press describe how women's presence helped to create a more secure environment at protests (Rose, 2019). They also depict particular acts of resistance such as graffiti with feminist slogans and the reclaiming of public spaces by women (Kowal and Fosgrau, 2019), showcasing women's "leadership" within the protest movement (CIVICUS Monitor, 2020).

These articles also highlight the incorporation of feminist demands into the broader sociopolitical agenda of the protest.

Women on the frontlines of the protest stood up to the violent attempts at suppression from security forces and militia supporters (Anderson and Cheeseman, 2019). In Duque's 2019 CNN article, she writes that women "have been key mobilizers" in the uprising, noting their role in "leading marches, organizing sit-ins, chanting, discussing politics, and setting up tents", among other functions. Coverage describes how women's frontline action in

Lebanon inspired feminists in other Arab countries to stand up for their rights (Elbasnaly, 2019).

In addition, journalistic works such as Hamzeh's (2020) article in al-Modon describe how women challenged stereotypical images of Lebanese femininity, from ones portraying women as only interested in fashion trends to ones portraying them as fierce fighters and defenders of their rights. The article highlights how feminist organizers such as Alia Awada rejected the claim that the "revolution is female", instead arguing that the "revolution in Lebanon is feminist"; her point was that feminism is not just about women but rather reflects a wide range of socioeconomic issues.

Policy demands that addressed issues such as reforms of personal status laws and child marriage also gained traction (Fakih, 2019). Articles in the CIVICUS Monitor (2020) describe a feminist march on the 3rd of November 2019 and acknowledge the role that women's rights organizations have played in the protest movement. One such article quotes co-founder and co-director of the Fe-Male Feminist Collective Hayat Mirshad where she says that there is no liberation "without equality".

Coverage also provided a historical and dynamic analysis of the protest from the point of view of queer participants. Sahar Mandour wrote an article for Amnesty International titled "[f]ifteen years of LGBTI community activism in Lebanon: A story of existence and oppression" (2019). Cindy Salame wrote in the journal Kohl that "it is instrumental to consider the potentialities generated by the October 17 revolution for queer movements to construct new solidarities" (2021). Articles also described chants against homophobia during protests, the spaces that were created by queer organizers, and the notable role that they played in the 2019 protests (Harb, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2020).

On the other hand, a 2021 report by UN Women documented the backlash against female protesters, as well as the sexist slander against and harassment of female parliamentarians, government officials and reporters. Examples include the personal details of female reporters being circulated on social media and an online campaign harassing at least one female reporter.

The report claimed that the security situation for female reporters covering the protests was deteriorating. Female reporters "described encountering different forms of violence than their male counterparts; the violence towards the female reporters was considerably more intense and gender-based" (UN Women, 2021, pp. 9). The study highlights how "female reporters covering the protests were disproportionately targeted with more — and more intense — physical and online violence than their male counterparts were" (pp. 4).

Negative coverage of feminist movements as well as feminist participation in the 2019 protests appeared in media platforms affiliated to traditional political parties. Many attempted to discredit the movements as foreign meddling by Western powers. In addition, ruling class figures and their supporters on social media platforms intentionally lumped together civil society groups, alternative political groups, academics, and anyone challenging the mainstream status-quo under the umbrella of "civil society", often associating it with a negative connotation and invisibilizing the nuances within the wider anti-establishment movement.

Similar to internal discussions in the early 1900s, today's feminist organizers recognize the importance of safe and inclusive spaces for discussion, brainstorming and strategizing. Collaborations between feminist organizers and those working to support migrant workers, refugees, and the LBGTQIA+ community were key to the successful establishment of many community spaces, such as the Dammeh Cooperative, Haven for Artists, Mansion, and others.

CONCLUSION

This brief overview of the history of media coverage of women's rights and feminist movements in Lebanon and the Arab region yields countless takeaways and inspirational points.

First, the long and rich history of women's rights activism in Lebanon and the wider Arab region shows the wide array of creativity involved in indigenous feminist organizing. Women writers, artists and organizers drew upon diverse methods and forms of expression to challenge dominant narratives and create new opportunities for themselves and future generations of women. On the other hand, Arab feminists did not isolate themselves from international discussions around gender justice and actively participated in shaping their outcomes. They fostered locally relevant connections between gender equality and other movements, particularly those for national liberation from imperial and colonial powers. In other words, women activists, writers, artists, and media personnel finely merged being cemented indigenously and being part of developing international discussions on gender issues.

Second, women in Lebanon and the Arab region have long challenged the assumption that marginalized groups are passive victims. They actively struggled not only for specific causes such as gender justice, but to address the broader roots of inequality, patriarchy and discrimination. Across various forms of media, women put their own perspective of historical events on the table and shaped discourses on major issues, proactively challenging dominant, patriarchal narratives and addressing sociopolitical developments from an intersectional perspective.

Third, the history of women's rights and feminist organizing reveals that while ruling class figures and patriarchal structures have always sought to silence certain voices and repress the freedoms of certain social groups (often the majority of society), feminists have always found a way to express themselves. The wide diversity of media initiatives, the different forms of expression through artists' work, and the different structural forms of organization reveal not only tenacious defiance to oppressive structures, but also incredible creativity and operational flexibility that further studies are yet to reveal.

Finally, this brief study highlights that the road to freedom is far from linear. Amidst recurrent periods of crisis in the region and reactionary backlashes against human rights movements, progress is often difficult to discern. But if we consider Zaynab Fawwaz's advocacy for women's empowerment during periods of political turbulence in the Ottoman Empire, the humanitarian services provided by women during the two World Wars, the narratives of social inequality introduced by the Decentrists during the Civil War, or the intersectional alliances between the causes of feminist movements and various marginalized communities, we can see that progress occurs even in the midst of turbulence. It is not always comprehensible in the moment, but it contributes to the larger, global story of local struggles for human rights advancement built on continuous dialectics of movements.

This research is far from extensive; it is a drop in the ocean of the history of women's rights and feminist movements in Lebanon and the region. It provides a concise review of some of the major debates, discursive trends and societal changes around women's rights and feminism during the last century.

It contributes to wider efforts to archive, historicize and trace feminist efforts across decades and centuries, so that present and future generations can have a better grasp of the depth of this legacy.

Today, Lebanon and the Arab region face a myriad of struggles ranging from socioeconomic crisis and conflict to climate change. The intersectional approach that feminist movements in the region have historically brought forward remains foundational to learn from, build upon, and continue to build a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive reality.

ANNEX

Sample of articles covering the 2019 Lebanon protest movement:

International:

- "Women lead Lebanon's protests" in German news organization DW (Elbasnaly, 2019)
- "A movement in good company: Voices of Lebanese women" in the London School of Economics and Political Science's blog section (Maddah, 2021).
- "Female protesters on the frontline in Lebanon" in France24 (Cheval, 2019).
- "Lebanon's protests could mark a victory for women" in CNN (Duque, 2019).
- "['If Not Now, When?']: Queer and Trans People Reclaim their Power in Lebanon's Revolution" in Human Rights Watch (Younes, 2020).
- "Lebanon protests seen as an 'opportunity' for LGBT+ community" in Reuters (Greenhalgh, 2019).
- "Lebanon protesters march over domestic violence bill" in the BBC (BBC, 2014).
- "In Lebanon, Violence Between the Sheets Is Legal" in WOMEN'S eNews (Daher, 2011).
- "In Lebanon, a Tangle of Religious Laws Govern Life and Love" in the Atlantic (Sussman, 2011).
- "Lebanon: Laws Discriminate Against Women" in Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2015).
- "['The revolution is changing me. It's making me hope']: young women on the protests in Beirut" in openDemocracy (Hao, 2019).
- "Lebanon's Women Have Fought for Change – and Should Get It" in Human Rights Watch (Fakih, 2019).
- "A women's revolution within the Lebanese revolution" in Peace Direct (Abou-Zahr, 2020).

Regional:

- "Women and women's rights are central to Lebanon's protest movement" in the Middle East Institute (Nassar, 2019).
- "Women stand defiantly at the vanguard of Lebanon's protest movement" in Middle East Eye (Anderson and Cheeseman, 2019).
- "What takes Lebanese women to front line in protests?" in al-Monitor (Frakes, 2019).
- "Lebanese women are breaking taboos to be face of protests" in the National News (Rose, 2019).
- "Women and students are at the heart of Lebanon's protests" in Arab News (Houssari, 2019).
- "'The revolution is female': Why feminist issues are driving Lebanon's protests" in the New Arab (Khalil, 2019).

Local:

- "Women are on the frontlines of the Lebanese protests" in Beirut Today (Kowal and Fosgrau, 2019).
- "['The revolution is female'] in 17 October... And after it women won't stay silent ("الثورة أنثى" في 17 تشرين.. وبعدها لن تسكت امرأة)" in al-Modon (Hamzeh, 2020).
- "Forging Solidarities: Queer Voices in the October 17 Revolution" in the journal Kohl (Salame, 2021).

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