

dominant Palestinian orientation is towards the past, because it considers the lost past sacred. How can tradition be part of a future discourse? This question has no answer so far.

In this context, at a stage where the political and ideological balance of power favored the conservative forces, the General Union of Palestinian Women emerged. It had to be affected by the times, especially by this balance of forces. It could only be a bureaucratic body without autonomy. Although it was supposed to be a mass organization, all of its membership, both leadership and base, belonged to certain party organizations, depriving it of the chance to be a mass organization and rendering it the expression of a socio-administrative elite closely related to the leading political elite.

Bureaucratic mentality affects not only people working at offices, but goes further to impose the mentality of hierarchy, putting some above others for subjective considerations. The bureaucratic logic leaves no room for real emancipation of women. Such logic has affected the function of women in the resistance movement where she has remained on the periphery without taking up any important role in politics or administration, except in a few cases. This phenomenon points to the traditional concept of women which has remained dominant.

The resistance movement assigned women to a role beyond their traditional domestic role. Women became militants, taking part in military training as well as operations from time to time, taking jobs at offices and carrying out informational functions. Moreover, the resistance pervaded daily life, especially in the camps of Lebanon. Men and women divided their time between the small family and the bigger one, i.e., the movement. Thus, logically, women should have become equal to men in all fields, but at the practical level, things were different, not only because of the dominant ideological orientation, but also because of bureaucratism which is based on routine rather than creative development.

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The «exterior» and «interior» (referring to inside and outside of Palestine), were common terms in the resistance. Consciously or unconsciously, the intifada dropped this division to declare that the people are one in spite of many political and ideological differences. Since this integration is determined by a great event, it is necessary to look for the means of making this unity continuous and dynamic. Women have a big role in this unity which is bound to cancel the existing qualitative difference between the categories of exile and homeland.

Women involved in the resistance have usually ended up with their defined role in their political organizations; the particularity of the women's status was completely absorbed into the overall national - political struggle. Due to the prevailing organizational rivalry, relations among the different women's organizations were not governed by a mentality of dialogue and uniting efforts. Instead, they too were governed by the mentality of rivalry, weakening their role and influence. Women's struggle was based on a categorical motto that was subjective rather than objective: Measure all things exclusively from the point of view of the concerned organization. Although organizational discipline is a positive quality, the

spirit of competition has affected women's activities negatively. Palestinian women under occupation have concentrated on fighting the visible enemy, the women of the resistance have concentrated on their respective organizations fighting the enemy. Between the two mentalities exists a wide gap.

Over and above that, while women under occupation defend their dignity and that of the homeland, some organizations, the right-wing ones in particular, have reduced women's relation to the struggle to a socioeconomic one; thus the organization becomes a political and economic affiliation. Between the two, there is a clear distinction and a wide gap.

The Israeli occupation has destroyed the traditional social structure, especially at the economic level, and pushed women into the labor market. The resistance movement, on the other hand, especially in the camps of Lebanon, has had a significant effect on the social structure, especially at the economic level. It has pushed women into organizations to earn their living. This often happened without even minimal ideological education.

All the above-mentioned factors, as well as many others, necessitate the unification of women's efforts, especially after the political unification of the homeland and the diaspora, to wage a new continuous struggle for a comprehensive moral reform in the Palestinian resistance movement. Palestinian women, who are in the frontline of the struggle against the enemy, should occupy the leading position they deserve in all the national political activities. This call may appear feminist in the eyes of conservative-minded people, but it is the true expression of the reality and the revolution, because Palestinian women remain the excellent representatives of a heroic fighting people. Palestinian women have scored many successes in their striving for liberation, in the course of fighting both in exile and under occupation. However, the culmination of this emancipatory process with the full liberation of the Palestinian women is conditioned upon ousting all leading Palestinian personnel who see women as unequal creatures. ●

