

she was killed in a battle with British soldiers at Wadi Azzoun.

In 1942, women's solidarity associations were formed with branches in the main cities. In 1947, upon the UN's adoption of the partition plan, she was alongside the Palestinian man building barricades and fortifications, digging trenches, transporting weapons and forming more associations, like the one called Daisy Flower in Jaffa, which provided medical care, food and water to those fighting to defend the land. Members of this association included Yusra Toukan, Fatima Abdul Huda, Juhenia Khorshid and Arabia Khorshid. Women also joined the fighters in their attacks. Many were martyred, including Juliet Zakka, Jamile Ahmad, Deba Atyeh and Helwe Zaidan. The latter had taken the gun of her husband after he and their son were martyred; she continued shooting at the Zionist gangs until her martyrdom on April 9, 1948. On April 10, 1948, Hayat Balbisi, who taught school in Deir Yassin, upon hearing of the massacre there, left her parents' house in Jerusalem and hurried to the village. There she was martyred while helping the people and protecting school children from the Zionists' savage artillery.

## **Stage two: May 1948 - June 1967**

Women's struggle, like the entire Palestinian national movement, suffered a recession after 1948. The reasons are obvious: the partition of Palestine, with the Zionists occupying the major portion, the West Bank annexed to Jordan, and the Gaza Strip placed under Egyptian administration. The reasons for the recession can also be traced to the nature of the leading Palestinian national bourgeoisie, whose interests were now directly linked to either the Jordanian or Egyptian regime.

A new characteristic of this stage was that women began to join political movements, but this was minimal and limited to women with higher education. In general, women's activities in this period were charitable and social endeavors, with some superficial political work. Still, gains were made in the 1948 occupied territories, and more women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip responded to educational opportunities.

Upon the occupation, the constrictions imposed on women in the traditional society were compounded by the restrictions imposed on all Palestinians in the Zionist state, which perpetuated the British Emergency Defense Regulations to control the population under occupation. The Zionists aimed to make the Palestinian Arabs ignorant; social activities, clubs and national associations were prohibited, while avenues to continuing education were blocked. Roughly the same policy, in different forms, was applied by the Jordanian regime in the West Bank.

In the 1948 occupied land, Palestinian women encountered difficult economic conditions. They could not be employed in the productive sector and were generally barred from higher education. Thus, women tended towards agriculture and marginal jobs. Their social and political activities were limited to those of a few who were able to work through the

Communist Party, Rakah. In the early sixties, more women managed to continue their education. At the same time, the founding of Al Ard (The Land) movement afforded an independent Palestinian political framework. Women immediately joined this movement, and some like Najaa al Asmar rose to leading positions.

In the Gaza Strip, the women's role was minimal due to the economic and social backwardness prevailing there. Yet they participated in demonstrations: in 1954, protesting against the project to resettle Palestinians in the Sinai desert; in February 1955, protesting the Israeli attack on the Gaza railway station; on March 7, 1957, after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, which had been occupied during the 1956 tripartite aggression on Egypt. Women also participated in the continuous one-week demonstration which helped to foil the plan to internationalize the Gaza Strip.

In this period, women also participated in the big demonstrations in the West Bank against the imperialist-reactionary plan to form the Baghdad pact. This demonstration was prohibited and brutally attacked by the Jordanian regime, resulting in the martyrdom of many, including Raja Abu Amashe. Many others were arrested in similar demonstrations, such as Widad Qumri, Suad Hureish, Nahil Oweida.

In the Gaza Strip, women displayed greater interest in educational opportunities, this being allowed by the Egyptian regime. Thus, their employment opportunities began gradually improving with the possibility of becoming a teacher, doctor, engineer or social assistant. This gave women new and broader prospects for joining the national struggle alongside the men.

In 1964, the General Union of Palestinian Women was founded, after the establishment of the PLO. This allowed a greater number of women to participate. Through the Union, many women attended the Palestinian National Council held in Jerusalem at that time. The union held its first congress in Jerusalem in 1965, and branches were set up in many cities and villages of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Later in 1966, upon the Jordanian regime's decision to close all PLO associations, the union was closed. Yet it continued to function secretly through associations and operating sewing centers, as well as first aid and nursing courses, and political and cultural sessions.

## **Stage three: The 1967 occupation and the rise of the Palestinian Resistance**

After occupying the remaining parts of Palestine, the Zionists started once more enacting their plans to empty the land of its inhabitants; more Palestinian families were displaced, mainly to neighboring Arab countries. Under military rule, political, social and ideological activities were prohibited for Palestinians, while their land was confiscated. There were laws aiming to make the population ignorant, interference in education and prevention of employment opportunities, to