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Editorial: Adopting fair principles for citizenship guarantees equality

Women's organisations and movements worldwide have given the issue of citizenship considerable attention due to its role in defining social relationships and concepts. Concepts of citizenship affect equality between people, men and women, and thus control equal opportunities between them.

Here in Palestine, we are on the verge of defining the concept of citizenship along with the related political, civil, social and economic rights of men and women. Will men and women be considered equal citizens with equal rights? Will they be judged in regards to their social roles and their public/private attributions? These are questions arising now among women's organisations with the hope that a just, fair and equal concept of citizenship will be implemented.

In order to avoid defining citizenship unfairly, it is recommended that definitions be grounded in gender-sensitive criteria rather than in patriarchal values. One criterion which would be unfair would be to define citizenship and people's rights according to one's involvement in the labour market. Around 90% of Palestinian women are not considered part of the official labour market and therefore are not required to pay taxes. Creating a linkage between citizenship and the labour market would be unfair because it would ultimately deprive women of their rights, such as their social and health insurance. This also underestimates women's other productive and domestic labor.

The modern concept of citizenship focuses on the individual without discrimination on the basis of sex, class, race or ethnicity. It grants all people equal opportunities and equal social, political, civil and economic rights. Women are considered independent and must be treated as such, not in relation to their male family members.

Following is a brief summary of two relevant declarations issued in Palestine after the Oslo Agreement:

1. The Nationality Law Draft (1995)
2. The Palestinian Authority and Citizenship in the Palestinian Land (1997)

- Unfortunately, both declarations adopted a patriarchal and traditional concept of citizenship
- Both considered men, only, as citizens

- Both used male-oriented language in addressing issues
- The Nationality Law Draft deprives a woman of the right to grant her nationality to her husband or children. This is based on the various nationality laws adopted by Arab regimes
- Both declarations clearly divide between the public and the private and classify citizenship as relating to the public domain
- Women are considered dependant on men and on their respective clans and tribes, a fact that deprives them from equal representation as women

The road to development, consequently, is complex, but it would be simplified if equal and just concepts of citizenship were adopted, rather than unequal, traditional and patriarchal ones.

Palestinian women longing for identity
Al-Tarifi: We are doing our best to re-unite families
Buthaina Al-Sarraheen

Thousands of Palestinian women live “illegally” in Palestine in Israel’s eyes, because the latter refuses to grant them family unification. Most of these women are Palestinians born and raised abroad, whose families were displaced and became refugees after the wars with Israel. Yet, due to the close family relationships within the Palestinian social structure, relatives outside of Palestine try to maintain their connections by marrying their daughters to cousins living within Palestine.

These women have no identity cards and so, after marrying in Palestine, must live as foreigners staying in the country as mere visitors. Family unification is extremely difficult because it is a political matter. According to the signed agreements with Israel, the Palestinian Authority has full rights to granting family unification to any of its citizens, unless “security” reasons demand otherwise. Reality, however, states the opposite. Israel has agreed to grant unification to only 2000 Palestinians, resulting in enormous problems.

Jameel Al-Tarifi, Minister of Civil Affairs, defends the position of the Palestinian Authority, claiming that it is doing its best to achieve family unification for all those applying for it. However he stresses how complicated the process is due to its political dimension. He also states that the applications are processed according to their serial numbers, without prioritising anyone as some have claimed. There are specific humanitarian cases which are given priority due to special circumstances. He also explains that the process of unification is not based on any discrimination between men and women, and that the Palestinian Authority therefore should not be blamed for negligence.

The challenge facing women journalist
Al-Zakira Lil-Sahafeh

Palestinian women journalists tend to be marginalised and underestimated by their respective employers, although not formally. Many of them are hardworking and highly professional, demonstrating great potential, yet the patriarchal hierarchy seems to be more powerful than the forces

of creativity and success. Women rarely become chief editors, deputy editors or columnists, for example.

Mr. Maher Al-Sheikh, deputy editor of Al-Quds Newspaper, attributes this to women's nature and to social barriers. He explains that Al-Quds Newspaper does not discriminate between men and women on any level, but that the nature of journalism requires working at night, which women in our society find difficult to accommodate due to social and family perceptions and duties. He also says that the quality of written material submitted is the factor which determines whether or not it will be published. Its publication. Whether the writer is a man or a woman is of no significance.

Mr. Hafez Barghuti, chief director of Al-Haya Al-Jadeedah Newspaper, justifies women's marginalisation in a similar way. He emphasizes a journalist's night duties and says that this reality of the job runs the nature of our society and of life in terms of work for women circumstances, whose obligations allow them to only work the day shift. He doesn't underestimate the capacity of women journalist capacities and expresses regret that once they get married they often resign from their jobs as journalists. He believes that while it is difficult for a woman to work as a journalist if she is married, it is even more difficult if she has children. As a result, he believes that journalism is not an ideal job for a woman.

Women, therefore, face the challenges of their social and family responsibilities, on the one hand, and of their job-related duties and directors' demands, on the other. They are accountable to both sides, subject to severe criticism from the former and marginalisation from the latter.

It is worth questioning whether the night-shift issue is the real cause for women's more limited success in journalism, because the field of nursing also requires night work and is considered to be one of the "typical" female jobs, yet it isn't socially or professionally rejected. So why would this become an issue in the field of journalism?

Ultimately, it is a matter of discipline and social awareness. Solutions can always be found for domestic responsibilities and child care.

Women and work: Emancipation and freedom
Attorney In'aam Abdul-Hadi
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Since the beginning of time, women have been highly active in the domestic and private spheres of life and therefore responsible for all related -- and of course unpaid -- jobs and duties. This is a result of the sexual division of labour that identifies women as belonging to the private, reproductive sphere and men as belonging to the public, productive one.

Women's involvement in public, paid jobs is relatively recent, and the study of women's public participation was only started in the mid-seventies. Dr. Ghalia Hamadallah's study, *Women in the Labour Market*, examines women's different public-sphere jobs by studying the Egyptian Al-Ahram Newspaper's advertisements: 205 advertisements were carefully studied, representing 22 types of jobs. The following is a list of these jobs, ranked from those with the most demand to the least:

1. Secretary: 58 advertisements
2. Saleswomen
3. Service workers
4. Nurses
5. Attorney: one advertisement only

148 (90%) out of the 205 ads were for service-related jobs and only 51 ads were for jobs in production.

Dr. Hamadallah has also studied the labour market's conditions and priorities for women service workers. The following is a list from the highest priority to the least:

1. Appearance
2. Language
3. Academic credentials
4. Experience
5. Place of residence

It is clear that women are perceived to be best suited to service-related jobs, which supports their association with a domestic role. In addition, they are not hired for their academic credentials or qualifications but for their looks, which indicates society's perception of women as objects offering services.

This is not only the case in Egypt but in most Arab countries. Here in Palestine the case is different in terms of women's total involvement in the labour market, due to the Israeli occupation. Women's participation in the labour force is only 14.4%, according to a 1995 statistic. This number is very low but doesn't reflect the overall professional qualification of Palestinian women.

In general, women have entered the public sphere to work for two reasons: to provide financial support to their families and to serve as substitutes for men in cases of wars. Entering the public sphere to prove oneself, to achieve economic independence or to assist in the process of development is a matter of social welfare. Many people believe that the phenomenon of women competing in the labour is the largest factor contributing to unemployment for men, and on that basis call for women to return to the "domestic and private" sphere to give men more opportunities.

Loafing Around: The lack of clubs and youth organizations

The global phenomena of idleness and harassment are increasing in our Palestinian cities, especially in Ramallah. Many women of various ages and social classes complain of physical harassment by men – most often youth. For this reason, a delegation from the Woman Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) met with Ramallah District Police Chief, Kamal Al-Sheikh, who had the following to say about the issue:

Ramallah, with a population of 264,000, lies in the centre of the West Bank, drawing Palestinian from all communities. It has lively and academic atmosphere due to the two universities, 11 colleges and 27 high schools in the area.

While the police are working to implement the law, they face great difficulties, in part because for Palestinians breaking the law has become a patriotic act during the many years of resisting occupation. It is difficult to force our youth to follow the law as a result of the general culture and climate of morality in which they live.

Youth make up 70% of the Palestinian society. The lack of clubs and places for entertainment means that there are few alternative for recreation, with the result that large numbers of youth loaf around on the streets for hours. While we try our best to prevent harassment, the help of organisations and youth institutes is desperately needed.

The chief police officer expressed surprised when we explained that many girls fear approaching police stations for help. He stressed that everyone is welcome to file a complaint with the

police who are committed to support her or him and maintaining full confidentiality of their cases. Help can be reached by calling service No.100.

Anyone wishing to take the perpetrators of harassment to court will receive full support, especially in cases of physical harassment or rape. There are also women police officers and detectives available to conduct full investigations. Chief Kamal called upon all women victims to inform him about the issues they have faced so as to find effective solutions.