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Attorney Islah Hassanieh: Women have to prove their abilities

“Men have never contributed more than women in any field or profession,” said Islah Hassaniah at the start of her interview with *Voice of Women*. Islah, a lawyer, spoke to us after she was elected to the board of the Palestinian Bar Association.

She obtained a BA in law from Ein Shams University in Cairo and finally crowned her successful career with the election to the Bar’s board, getting the fourth highest number of votes. She was also elected as treasurer of the Bar.

With this success, she becomes the first Palestinian woman to be elected to the Bar Association’s board since the two syndicates of Gaza and the West Bank have been unified. Two other female lawyers ran as candidates for these elections in Gaza in 1992 and 1994.

When asked about the motive behind her candidacy to a “male-only” position, she replied, ‘the question of patriarchal society has always irritated me; it has no meaning. Female lawyers represent one-third of the Bar’s members at a time when the new law stipulates for the formation of a women’s affairs committee in every union or syndicate. As for the reason why I ran for this election, it comes from my concern for the suffering faced by lawyers and my desire to stand by them.’”

She continued, "Every profession has its problems and every syndicate has its needs and demands. As a woman, I felt a need to prove myself in the syndicate in order to ensure that there is no discrimination inside."

While carrying all the commitments of a lawyer and as a woman, Islah Hassanieh has learned to balance her responsibilities to her profession and to her society, providing a model of a successful working woman.

Number of detained children up by 14%

A legal report documents a rise in the number of children detained by Israeli authorities. This year alone the detention rate has increased by no less than 14%. The report, prepared by the International Movement for the Defense of Children, shows that detention orders were issued against children and that 20 children are held in administrative detention in addition to 50 earlier this year.

Such detentions have been 'legitimized' by military order no. 1500, which allows for the arrest of children for 18 days without appearance before a court and without contact with lawyers or families. This order was amended two months later to reduce the period to 12 days. The re-occupation of Palestinian land in 2002 in addition to the new military orders caused a sharp rise in the arbitrary detention of children and the practice of all forms of torture against them without Israel being held accountable in any way by the international community. All detained children have faced at least one form of torture while detained, included beating, threats of beating, humiliation and threats, chaining of arms, blindfolding, deprivation of fulfilling natural needs, deprivation of washing, exposure to extremely high or extremely low temperatures, being held in overcrowded rooms, inadequate food and malnutrition, lack of medical care and lack of outdoor activity.

As a result of the increased numbers of detainees in Israeli jails, the occupation forces have detained children for long periods in temporary detention centers that lack of all basic requirements for longer stay. Children spend months in such centers.

Ibrahim Mohammad Al Haj (15) spent more than two months in one of these centers. He said it is an unbearable situation. He is held with 11 other detainees in a small room with only four mattresses and four blankets. They are not allowed to use the bathroom more than three times per day. There is nothing else in the room and they have nothing to do except talk to each other. They do not have access to any books or reading material. They get three meals per day, which are inadequate in terms of both quantity and quality. They are also ill-treated by soldiers and the jail administration who often impose additional restrictions on them.

With all this, families are not allowed to visit their children, who also cannot see their lawyers in virtue of re-activation of the administrative detention orders.

Elections for the General Union of Palestinian Women?

Women called for the activation of the role of the General Union of Palestinian Women by holding local conferences in Palestinian cities as a first step to hold elections inside all of the 17 branches (10 in the West Bank and 7 in Gaza).

It seems that talking about Palestinian general elections (presidential and legislative) motivate women committees to revive the Union and develop its role on the political, social and economic levels.

The first conference of the General Union of Palestinian Women was held in Jerusalem in 1965 after the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization upon initiative of leading women. The second and third conferences were held in

1974 and 1980 in Beirut – Lebanon while the fourth conference was organized in Tunis in 1985.

The question is being asked by young leader women who still did not find their way through to the Union: is there a real intention among women leaders to hold such elections? Or will they continue to justify the delay by the occupation and the impediments it imposes? Will the elections be held – as set – next October?

Democratic Political Activists Forum in Jordan Highlights electoral experience of Palestinian women

The experience of Palestinian women in legislative and municipal elections was highlighted in the conference of the Democratic Political Activists Forum in Jordan that began on 12 July and continued for a whole week.

The conference focused on democratic issues and principles in the Arab world and the applicability thereof. It also provided training to participants from six countries: Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon. The Palestinian delegation comprised four women from Jenin, Jerusalem and Gaza in addition to a number of journalists. The papers presented to the conference covered the experience of Palestinian women in the previous elections and the lessons learned for future elections. It also explained the problems the Palestinian women face because of the Israeli occupation measures and its policy of assassination, demolition, detention and psychological and economic pressures, which contradict with the minimal principles of democratic life.

Other experiences were also presented, which enriched the experience and knowledge of participants.

Nada Khazmo: Vice Editor-in-chief of Abayader Alsyasi

She has chosen to become a militant and professional woman. She focused on the humanitarian dimension of journalism, which is always marginalized because of the intensive political concerns.

Nada Khazmo is a journalist and educationalist. She aspires for the development, education, counseling and raising awareness of individuals in addition to achieving general change and reform. This is her philosophy in life. She started her professional career as a teacher for seven years before she started working as journalist. Nonetheless, she still contributed to the writing of Palestinian curricula in Christian religion.

The advice she gives to Palestinian media women is to remember that journalism is not an office, a chair, pen, papers and a computer. It is reaching out for the public, listening to them and to their problems. In this way, journalists can be the spokespersons of their people and can convey its aspirations and messages to the whole world.

Khazmo also publish a collection of short stories entitled, “departure of the night” in 1987 including stories from the situation during the Intifada.

Fayzah: after coming this far, tuition fees may destroy hopes of university

Yes! JD 300 may halt the future of a young woman who achieved excellent results on her baccalaureate exams obtaining an overall average of 95%. Fayza was deprived of education for ten years as a result of poverty but with the encouragement of friends, family and teachers she re-enrolled in school.

Fayzah, 28, from Balat camp says she could not pursue her education when she was ill and after she recovered, she tried to return to school. But the head teacher told her that it would be difficult to promote her to the second secondary class because she had not sat for the final exams. Ten years later, she benefited from the ‘free education’ project launched by UNDP in collaboration with Ibad Alrahman Mosque in Balata and the Services Committee in the Camp.

After her glorious success, many agencies promised her grants and scholarships, but nothing was concrete. Now, she lives with the fear that the JD 300 will deprive her again from education.

