

A Comparison: The Involvement of Palestinian Women in The First and Second Intifadas

Introduction

Change is often a sign of progress, however, the resulting effects of the First and Second Intifadas on the Palestinian Women's Movement suggest otherwise. The Intifadas are historical periods where Palestinian living in the Occupied Territories joined political and social forces to demonstrate their concerns with the occupation that suffocated their daily lives; what resulted were two Intifadas: The first began on December 8th, 1987 and the second on September 28th, 2000. The First and Second Intifadas have been dramatically different in several ways. Among the most prominent of these differences have been the contributions and roles of Palestinian women in the Palestinian National Movement.

Background: Amal Kavar, author *Daughters of Palestine: Leading Women of the Palestinian National Movement*.

This project was inspired by: *Daughters of Palestine: Leading Women of the Palestinian National Movement* by Palestinian author Amal Kavar. Kavar depicts the contributions of Palestinian women to the Palestinian National Movement from the mid-1960s to the early 1990s. Their contributions included military, organizational, educational, and social and cultural involvement among others.

Amal Kavar's primary focus is "the institution of women's leadership and how it evolved in conjunction with developments in the history of the Palestinian struggle since the establishment of Israel in 1948" (Kavar, ix). The goals she presents in her investigation have served as the foundational resource for my own inquiries regarding the roles of women in the Palestinian National Movement during the first and second Intifadas. She divides the book into what she calls "three generations of women leaders," each period representing a distinct group of women whose contributions were influenced by the times in which they were active. Kavar's methodology consists of interviews with women representing these various generations of Palestinian women activists. The three generations are:

- Women born in the 1920s: These women established the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) under the supervision of the Palestinian Leadership Organization. This was considered a "historic move because it opened up opportunities for women to participate in the struggle for national liberation, side by side with men" (2).
- Women born in the 1930s and 1940s: These women organized at the height of the Arab Nationalist Movement led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. The PLO brought these women to leadership roles, placing them centrally in the PLO's infrastructure. The GUPW started in the previous generation, transformed into a mobilizing organization which began to include thousands of women living in refugee camps.
- Women born in the 1950s: These women were catalyzed by the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. This group of women continues today, however there is a seemingly dramatic change in the format of the women's movement.

Background: Dr. Karma Nabulsi, Ph.D. Oxford University.

The Palestinian American Women Association's (PAWA) keynote speaker at their Annual Celebration of Women's Banquet, Dr. Karma Nabulsi provided me with a tangible account as to the involvement of Palestinian women in the National Movement. Dr. Nabulsi was an integral part of the Palestinian Leadership Organization (PLO), serving as a representative between 1977 and 1990. In addition, she served as an advisor for the PLO at the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks between 1991 and 1993. She is currently a Research Fellow at the Nuffield College, Oxford.

Dr. Nabulsi was one of the women interviewed by Amal Kavar in 1990. After our conversation, she volunteered herself as a mentor for my journey. Her insight and insider knowledge provided me a first hand account of the mobility of women in the struggle. We discussed the infrastructures within which women had to work. As I articulated my question to Professor Nabulsi, she warned against jumping to conclusions, for the dynamics of the women's movement transformation

between the First and Second Intifadas reflected an intricate web of factors including occupation, resource availability, mobility and more.

Objective

As a result of background reading in preparation for this research project and conversations I have had with my research professor, Lara Deeb regarding the topic it has become evident to me, that there has been a critical transition in the contributions and roles of Palestinian women in the Palestinian National Movement in recent decades. After reading the work of Amal Kawar and talking with Professor Nabulsi, it has become evident to me that there needs to be an understanding of the differences between the first and second Intifadas.

The ideas of Palestinian nationalism and self-determination define the character of Palestinians. Women play an integral role in the perpetuation of these ideologies. During the First Intifada, the Palestinian Women's Movement took flight. In the Second Intifada however a difference was found, and continues to exist. My question is why? Why were women in the First Intifada able to mobilize and institutionalize, whereas women activists in the Second Intifada were not?

If given the opportunity to conduct this research, I hope to answer my question about these differences, with respect to Palestinian women's activism, between the First and Second Intifadas. In addition the following specific objections will be addressed in my project:

- Define the particularities of the First and Second Intifadas respectively, with respect to the contributions and roles of Palestinian women activists.
- Describe the differences of the women's movement in each of the Intifadas.
- Explain why the First Intifada materialized as it did.
- Explain why the Second Intifada differed.

I hope that such information will provide me with a new understanding of the Palestinian National Movement, from the women who supported and comprised the PLO and other authoritative agencies. This project will not only provide me with insight into a complex intersectional movement, I also hope to produce an honors thesis resulting from the information collected.

Methodology

Semi-Structured Interviews: Please see page four for sample questions.

This form of interview is constructed such that there are general concepts about which I will be asking each of the women I will be interviewing. However, the structure of the interview is flexible enough that I will be able to formulate specific questions for each respective activist, thus allotting time to branch out into other topics.

I plan to undertake this project by conducting semi-structured interviews with a total of 20 to 25 Palestinian women in both Palestine and Jordan. As a result of the 1948 Occupation, many of the women active in the First Intifada have been displaced, and are located in neighboring Jordan. I have divided my potential interviewees into three separate categories; each representing a specific group of Palestinian women activists:

- **Group A:** Women *active* in the First Intifada
- **Group B:** Women *active* in the Second Intifada
- **Group C:** Women *active* in both the First and Second Intifadas

I will be able to contact these women through familial resources, and connections that I have made while preparing for this project. Dr. Nabulsi has offered herself as a point of reference, for she has had, and continues to have, direct contact with many women in the Palestinian National Movement.

Data Collection/Security

In an attempt to guarantee the safety and confidentiality of data collected from the women, all information will be secured in a password sensitive brief case. All documents stored on CD and will be password sensitive.

To ensure the validity of data collected, I will be using two methods to record data collected:

- Tape Recording Interviews: The interviews will be recorded and transcribed immediately upon returning from overseas. Upon transcription, the tapes will be destroyed to ensure the confidentiality of my participants.
- Journal: All written documents will be of my own contributions and accounts.

Upon collection of the data from the interviews, I hope to compile enough information to understand the differences between the First and Second Intifadas.

Feasibility/Access

I am confident in my ability to carry out this project safely, I have family in both Palestine and Jordan with whom I will be living with during my time there. I have also spent time in that region of the world consistently throughout my life. I am proficient in Arabic: reading, writing and speaking. In addition to a social and cultural understanding, I will have access to literary and scholarly resources at the following universities:

- Palestine: Birzeit University, Ramallah and Al-Najah University, Nablus.
- Jordan: Yarmouk University, Irbid and University of Jordan, Amman.

Language

Being Palestinian, and raised in a multi-lingual household, I have become proficient in Arabic as I am in English. I have studied abroad in Jordan thus learning to read, write and speak Arabic.

Challenges

Due to the challenges caused by the occupation in Palestine, the only logistical challenge that I may encounter is time. The actual time to travel from place to place may be a little longer than ordinarily due to road blocks resulting from the occupation. To alleviate this possible situation, I will allot myself enough travel time to account for the duration it will take for me to mobilize. Overall however, I do not see any factors that will hinder my ability to perform this research in Palestine and in Jordan.

Purpose

I intend to use this research project and my time spent abroad in Palestine and Jordan in order to gather information that will serve as the foundation for the future of my academic career. This project will also allow me to understand the intricacies of the Palestinian Women's Movement and the integral roles Palestinian women maintained in the struggle for autonomy and self-determination. I hope to shed visibility on the characteristics of women in the Palestinian movement and the contributions they provided to the Palestinian National Movement over a span of time. This project will provide a great amount of scholarly information that is not easily accessible. Due to the fact that the Second Intifada continues today, there has yet to be time for reflection on the implications of it, thus this project will be a prototype of sorts. Not only will this project allow for academic growth, but it will also contribute to the Palestinian Women's Movement through empowering the women themselves. Their contributions will be accounted for, and their roles will be placed in the foregrounds of academic discussion. This journey is also significant in that it will deconstruct previous assumptions and construct new paradigms. In general, this project will reiterate the importance of women in the Palestinian National Movement.

Roles/Responsibilities

In order to maintain direct contact with Professor Deeb, I will be contacting her bi-weekly to notify her of my progress and any issues as they may arise during my time abroad. In addition, she and I will be meeting sometime in late-August in Amman, Jordan to follow up on my progress and discuss any circumstances that are in need of direct attention.

Timeline

Fall 2004

- Met with UROP to discuss research opportunities

- Met with Professor Deeb and discussed mentorship possibility.
- Began brainstorming topics of interest, conducted outside reading, and read-up on current events that may spark interest.

Winter 2005

- Enrolled in Independent Study with Professor Deeb.
- Met weekly meetings discussing readings and worked on research questions.
- Formulated research objectives.
- Began rough draft of research proposal for Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP).
- Submit to Professor Deeb rough draft of research proposal on March 18th, 2005.

Spring 2005

- Continue to work on refining proposal.
- Met with Christina Rahn to discuss concerns with IRB-C application.
- Began IRB-C application.
- Submitted IRB-C application, await protocol number.
- Finished proposal, prepare to submit for SURP on or before April 18th, 2005.
- Requested off-site IRB approvals and submitted hard copies upon receiving.
- Followed-up on all documents for the IRB-C.

Week of June 20th

- Travel to Amman, Jordan. Approximately 24hours of travel time.

Week of June 27th

- Travel to Hebron, Palestine. Approximately 12hours of travel time.

Week of June 29th

- Begin interviews in Palestine
- I will be interviewing between 15-20 women in Palestine. Each interview will be an estimated two hours in duration.
- I will be living in Hebron while in Palestine, and the average travel time due to occupation road blocks will be anywhere between an hour and two hours of transportation time.

Week of August 1st

- Return to Amman, Jordan to conduct remainder of research.

Week of August 8th

- Begin interviews. I will be interviewing no more than ten women in Amman, Jordan.
- I will be living in Tarek, Jordan, a suburb of Amman, and travel time to interview locations will average between 30 to 45 minutes.

Late August

- Meet with Professor Deeb in Amman, Jordan to follow up and review the progress of my research.

Early September

- Return from abroad.
- Begin post-interview data analysis
- Transcription: Seven minutes of transcription time per one minute of interview time. (Estimated transcription time for two hour interview ≈ 14hours/interview).
- Write-up of results.

Fall 2005

- Continue to work on data analysis and write-up of information.

Spring 2006

- Present at University of California, Irvine's Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Semi-Structured Interview:

Questions (For Groups A, B, and C)

Background Information:

- Identification: To which **Intifada group** does this individual belong to?
- What years were you involved in the Palestinian Women's Movement?
- What organizations do/have you belong/belonged to relating to the Palestinian Women's Movement?

Activism:

- Describe your involvement in the Palestinian Women's Movement during this Intifada.
- How did you become involved in activism?
- How would you define *Activism* during the time at which you were most involved?
- What resources were available to women's organizations and Palestinian women activists during your time of involvement?
 - Were there financial resources? If so, where did these funds come from?
- As an activist, how did you measure the mobility of the Palestinian Women's Movement?
 - What constraints did Palestinian Women face during your period of involvement, with respect to mobilization of their efforts?

Intifada Specific:

- What were the characteristics of this Intifada?
- How did women react to this Intifada?
- How did the occupation affect the women's movement? Shape the structures formed the movement? Impair the mobility of the Palestinian women's movement?

Roles: Palestinian Women in the Struggle:

- At the time of your involvement, how do you feel women measured their roles within the structures of the Women's movement? Outside the defined structures?
 - For example: How did women at home, whose mobility was restricted, define their role in the struggle for self-determination?
- How do you feel the majority of Palestinian women, living under the occupation, understood their respective roles as women in the political climate?

Semi-Structured Interview:**Questions (Group A Specific)****First Intifada Activists:**

- How different was/is the First Intifada from the Second?
- What characteristics of the women's movement are specific to the First Intifada?
- Do you believe there was an incline of women's involvement, a decline or no change in the involvement of women?

Semi-Structured Interview:**Questions (Group B Specific)****Second Intifada Activists:**

- Did you see a difference in the women's movement in comparison to the First Intifada? If so, what factors do you believe accounted for these differences?
- From a political perspective, how is the Second Intifada different from the First from?

Semi-Structured Interview:**Questions (Group C Specific)****Activists in both the First and Second Intifadas:**

- What transitions did you notice from the First and Second Intifadas?
- Did you find your role in the Palestinian Women's movement changed? If so, why do you think this change occurred?
- How would you define the change? Was it resultant of the political climate? Social? Cultural? Religious?
- Did the Occupation play a role in the change in activism? How?

Working Bibliography:

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Said, Edward W. The Question of Palestine. Canada: Vintage Books, 1992.

Resources and Authors:

- Amal Kawar
- Edward Said
- Julie Peteet
- Suha Sabbagh
- Professor Lara Deeb, University of California, Irvine.
- Palestinian American Women's Association; Orange County/Los Angeles, California
- Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World; Beirut, Lebanon
- Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee; Orange County/Los Angeles. California.
- Professor Karma Nabulsi, Oxford University.
- Birzeit University, Ramallah, Palestine.
- Al-Najah University, Nablus, Palestine.
- University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.
- Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.