

Gender and Feminist organising in Palestine: Brief Introduction and Short Reading List

The history of feminist movements in Palestine is tied to the struggle for Palestinian independence, where women have always been an active part in social movements and formed a feminist perspective specific to Palestine that questions the universalist norms of Western feminism. Examples of feminist organising in Palestine includes The General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) created in 1965 within the PLO, and Palestinian student organizations that were created in the 1970s (Jad 1990, 129), and The Women's Work Committee formed in 1978 that organising around reproductive labour or the 'unrecognized work of women in agriculture, female students, and housewives' (Hiltermann 1991, 132). Within the Palestinian Authority, these committees put forward gender programs and developed links with centers for women's studies, and Palestinian universities offered a space to discuss topics such as violence against women and discriminatory personal status laws (Jad 1995, 244).¹ However, some Palestinian women's demands for gender equality in the 1970s and 1980s were pushed aside in favour of the Palestinian national liberation struggle, and feminist perspectives developed that were critical of the nationalist movement (Marteu, 2012). After Fleischmann (2003): 'Palestinian women's associations were connected to their communities' political movements, while remaining active in a large charitable and mutual assistance network'. From informal domestic and community organising to formal politics, Palestinian women became more visible, with a turning point during the First Intifada (1987-1993) when Palestinian women occupied public space through protest, as well as continuing their support through the people's committees (e.g. education or cooking). In the 2018 JPS special issue of Queering Palestine, queer perspectives expand on earlier Palestinian feminist critiques of patriarchy, and the article 'Decolonial Queering' by Walaa Alqaisiya shows how Palestinian nationalist discourse, in both its secular and Islamic iterations, continues to be gendered in its portrayal of Palestine.

ARTICLES AND TALKS

Élisabeth Marteu (2012) Israeli and Palestinian Feminisms: Postcolonial Issues

Revue Tiers Monde Volume 209, Issue 1, 2012, pages 71 to 88

https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_RTM_209_0071--israeli-and-palestinian-feminisms.htm#

Justice is indivisible: Palestine as a feminist issue

Nada Elia Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society Vol. 6, No. 1, 2017, pp. 45-63

<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/28902>

Judith Butler, Lena Meari, Mai Masri, Angela Davis (2012)

Carceral Politics in Palestine and Beyond: Gender, Vulnerability, Prison

<http://palestine.mei.columbia.edu/events-spring-2012/2012/4/5/carceral-politics-in-palestine-beyond-gender-vulnerability-prison>

Journal of Palestine Studies Special Issue: Queering Palestine

Volume 47, Issue 3

Spring 2018 <https://online.ucpress.edu/jps/issue/47/3>

psychicrefuge.com

Frances S. Hasso (1998) 'The "Women's Front": Nationalism, Feminism, and Modernity in Palestine' *Gender and Society* Vol. 12, No. 4 (Aug., 1998), pp. 441-465 (25 pages)

Dr. Samah Jabr (2016) "Women of Palestine. Living through Trauma, Building Resilience" Interview by Alexandra Dols <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oleOC-xB-XI>

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2015) 'The Politics of Birth and the Intimacies of Violence Against Palestinian Women in Occupied East Jerusalem' *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 55, Issue 6, November 2015, Pages 1187–1206.

Amer Shehadeh, Gerrit Loots, Johan Vanderfaellie and Ilse Derluyn, 'The Impact of Men's Detention on the Psychological Wellbeing of Palestinian Women' *Mental Health in Family Medicine*, 2016; 12:200-204.

Dina Samaroo, ICSR Kings College London 'The Political Participation of Palestinian Women in Official and Non-Official Organizations in Limited Horizon' https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/KPMED-Paper_The-Political-Participation-of-Palestinian-Women-in-Official-and-Non-Official-Organizations-in-Limited-Horizon.pdf

ORGANISATIONS

Aswat - Palestinian Feminist Center for Gender and Sexual Freedoms Aswat <https://www.aswatgroup.org/> A grassroots, intersectional feminist, queer movement to increase visibility for different sexuality and gender expressions in Palestinian society.

Al Saraya Center for Community Development, Jerusalem (Old City) offers Women's psychosocial support and a Women's empowerment program <http://alsaraya-center.org/>

Jerusalem Center for Women (NGO), which holds education classes focused on women and their rights, which moved online to provide a virtual safe space during Covid-19. <https://www.j-c-w.org/>

Bisan Center for Research and Development, which has a Gender Justice program <https://www.bisan.org/about/>

The Gaza Community Mental Health Programme's (GCMHP) main focus is women and children <https://gcmhp.ps/about-us>

The Palestinian Counselling Centre has a women's empowerment programme for marginalised women in Jerusalem and Nablus <http://www.pcc-jer.org/en/programs/women%E2%80%99s-empowerment-program>
<http://www.pcc-jer.org/en>

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FILMS

<http://shashat.org/> Shashat An independent non-profit NGO for women's cinema in Palestine

Habibi Collective is an open-access resource, digital archive and curatorial platform for women's filmmaking from South-West Asia and North Africa. <https://www.habibicollective.com/>
<https://linktr.ee/habibicollective>

Shasha Movies, an independent streaming service for South-West Asian and North African (SWANA) cinema. <https://shashamovies.com/>

Films they have screened include:

The Kingdom of Women (2002), dir. Dahna Abourahme (Film)

The story of the women of Ein El Hilweh refugee camp between 1982 and 1984 is an important chapter in the history of Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon. After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the camp was destroyed and its men were imprisoned. Women rebuilt the camp and protected and provided for their families while their men were held captive.

Leila and the Wolves (1984), dir. Heiny Srour

On Feminist struggles in Palestine and Lebanon.

Screened as part of 'Liberating History: Arab Feminisms and Mediated Pasts' (2020)

The Block Museum of Art including films curated by Habibi Collective.

Duma (2011), dir. Abeer Zeibak Haddad (Film)

Arabic for 'dolls', Duma is a documentary based on testimonies of sexual abuse in Palestinian society.

Speed Sisters (2015) Dir. Amber Fares (Arabic and English w/ subtitles)

A documentary about the Palestinian women's racing team, the first in the MENA/SWANA region.

<https://speedsisters.tv/about>

Feminism in the Wider SWANA/MENA Region

Nawal El Saadawi (1977) The Hidden Face of Eve

Nawal El Saadawi (1975) Woman at Point Zero

Feminism Inshallah: A History of Arab Feminism (2014), Dir. Ferial Ben Mahmoud

Documentary giving a comparative overview of Arab feminism, as told from a range of scholars, civil rights activists and mothers.

<https://shashamovies.com/> Shasha Movies is an independent streaming service for cinema from South-West Asia and North Africa.

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Habibi Collective and Sharjah Art 'Ghosts of Songs: Oral Histories in MENA Female Cinema' (2020) <http://sharjahart.org/sharjah-art-foundation/events/ghosts-of-songs-oral-histories-in-mena-female-cinema>

'Liberating History: Arab Feminisms and Mediated Pasts' (2020)

The Block Museum of Art including films curated by Habibi Collective.

<https://www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu/cinema/cinema-series/liberating-history-arab-feminisms-and-mediated-pasts.html>