

For activists and academics—and everyone in between

## Who played this role?

In this film, there is a scene with Amneh (the maid) standing in the garden, playing with her long braided hair and conversing with her employer (*sidi*). Upon hearing the voice of the nightingale, Amneh suddenly feels sad.



*Du'a' al-Karawan* [The Nightingale's Prayer]

Faten Hamama

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## Opportunities

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### Call for Papers

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The International Feminist Journal of Politics announces the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual IFJP Conference, June 18-19, 2015.

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## International Conference "Arab Countries in Transition: Gender Rights & Constitutional Reforms"

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## Pinkwashing Settler-Colonialism Nada Elia

Colonialism and patriarchy go hand in hand. As it ravaged their communities, indiscriminately killing all who stood in its expansionist ways, 19th century France claimed that it was "liberating" Algerian women. And the proverbial colonial white man would have us believe that part of his "burden" was the noble impulse to save brown women from brown men. Israel, a settler colonial state, has come up with

the 21st century version of this nexus of racism and sexism, namely pinkwashing: the claim that its violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people is somewhat mitigated by its relatively greater acceptance of homosexuality.

Today, the dominant discourse about Zionism does not recognize Israel as a settler-colonial state, instead it anachronistically presents that country as an outcome of, and necessary response to the Holocaust.

Yet the first Zionist plans were articulated long before the Third Reich. Early Zionism fully identified as a colonialist movement, modeled upon the European colonization it emanated from. Vladimir Jabotinski speaks of Zionism in unabashedly colonialist terms when he writes (1923): "Every reader has some idea of the early history of other countries which have been settled. I suggest that he recall all known instances. If he should attempt to seek but one instance of a country

settled with the consent of those born there he will not succeed. ... Colonization itself has its own explanation, integral and inescapable, and understood by every Arab and every Jew with his wits about him. Colonization can only have one goal. For the Palestinian Arabs this goal is inadmissible. ... Zionist colonization, even the most restricted, must either be terminated or carried out in defiance of the will of the native population.<sup>1</sup>

However, as Western discourse on colonialism shifted by the 1960s, Zionist leaders resorted to a combination of reasons to justify their colonization of Palestine. Foremost was the Holocaust, the magnitude of which no European country could deny.<sup>2</sup> Then came the outright denial of the existence and rightful claims of Palestinians to nationhood, as the lie that Palestine was a “land without a people for a people without a land” became the more common Zionist motto. This attitude is best illustrated by former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, who “explained” to a British reporter that “**There were no such thing as Palestinians.** When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was

either southern Syria before the First World War, and then it was a Palestine including Jordan. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. **They did not exist**.”<sup>3</sup> Later, revisionist Israeli historians sought to justify the Palestinian dispossession by comparing it to the dispossession of the Native Americans, and saying it was for the “greater good”. Thus Benny Morris: “I feel sympathy for the Palestinian people, which truly underwent a hard tragedy.... But if the desire to establish a Jewish state here is legitimate, there was no other choice. ... Even the great American democracy could not have been created without the annihilation of the Indians. There are cases in which the overall, final good justifies harsh and cruel acts that are committed in the course of history.”<sup>4</sup>

Today, as alternative sources of information evade Zionist and corporate censorship, news of Israel's egregious violations of the Palestinian people's human rights have seriously tarnished Israel's image of a “final good”. Consequently, Israel is working to

fix that image by projecting itself as a vibrant society characterized by cultural openness, rather than by recurrent episodes of military assaults and deeply racist murderous rampages. Israel's cultural accomplishments become its glamorous mask, which it uses to distract from its reality of institutionalized racism and state-sponsored violence. This strategy, commonly referred to as the “Brand Israel” campaign, officially launched in October 2005, is the brainchild of a conglomerate of American marketing firms, and funded by Israel's three most powerful ministries: the Foreign Ministry, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Finance Ministry.<sup>5</sup> The driving concept behind the re-branding is that Israel will win supporters only if it is seen as relevant and modern, rather than as a place of fighting and religion. The target audiences, therefore, come from among the more “liberal” and secular social groups, rather than religious fundamentalists, since the latter, whether ultra-Orthodox Jews or American Christian, are already solidly in the Zionist camp.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Gay Market:**

It is within the context of “Rebranding Israel” that pinkwashing must be understood



as an official strategy to distract from Israel's apartheid policies. The essentially racist and colonialist impulse behind Israel's pinkwashing campaign is aptly articulated by Jasbir Puar, who writes:

Israeli pinkwashing is a potent method through which the terms of Israeli occupation of Palestine are reiterated – Israel is civilised, Palestinians are barbaric, homophobic, uncivilised, suicide-bombing fanatics. It produces Israel as the only gay-friendly country in an otherwise hostile region.... In reproducing orientalist tropes of Palestinian sexual backwardness, it also denies the impact of colonial occupation on the degradation and containment of Palestinian cultural norms and values. Pinkwashing harnesses global gays as a new source of affiliation, recruiting liberal gays into a dirty bargaining of their own safety against the continued oppression of Palestinians, now perform rebranded as “gay unfriendly”. This strategy then also works to elide the presence of numerous Palestinian gay and lesbian organizations, for example [Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#) (PQBDS).<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, a number of Arab LGBT organizations have long negotiated the personal and political spheres of sexual identity under occupation and apartheid. Israel may be gay-friendly for its tourists, because it needs them, financially, and for its “branding.” However, by denying Palestinians their basic inalienable human rights, it remains above all the greatest purveyor of institutionalized violence and oppression for all Palestinians, regardless of their sexuality. Queer Palestinians thus engage in a struggle against homophobia within their own culture (as indeed all queers of all nationalities do), but also against Israel's colonization, occupation, and apartheid, in the so-called “gay haven.”

Today, Palestinian queers are organizing to counter sexism, homophobia, and colonialism, and

## NGO Highlight

### El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture

El-Nadeem Center is an Egyptian NGO established in 1993. It is dedicated to combatting all forms of violence and torture and providing support to all victims. In 2000, the center created a special program for women offering a 24 hour hotline, in addition to counselling and rehabilitation sessions to survivors. The center also coordinates with other women NGOs to launch awareness campaigns, as well as offer help and build the capacity of local NGOs who wish to establish women support centers in different regions in Egypt.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the El-Nadeem Center

many are extremely eloquent in their response to this exploitation of their challenging circumstances by Israel. There are no excuses for queer activists globally to accept Israel's propaganda, unless it is because these “allies” are not truly comfortable with Palestinian agency, and with Palestinian queers' analysis of their oppression as it intersects with living under apartheid and occupation, or in the diaspora.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as the group PQBDS (Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) wrote,



**Sami Shamali, a member of the Palestinian LGBT group, Al-Qaws proclaims: "There is no magic pink door in the Apartheid Wall".**

in a petition calling on the International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organization not to hold its General Assembly in Israel:

"Israeli policies and occupation do not distinguish between queer and straight. All Palestinians---queer and straight--- must deal with the effects of the apartheid wall, checkpoints, and illegal settlements, and settlers violence, not to mention living under Israeli military law that strips them off their rights as civilians. All Gazans, including queers, live under an illegal siege in the de-facto open-air prison that is the Gaza strip. And like all Palestinian citizens of Israel, queers are subject to institutionalized discrimination in laws, education, and throughout their public and private lives."<sup>9</sup>

Members of the Palestinian queer community in Israel have long known that they are disenfranchised in Israel simply because they are Palestinian. Their politicization has always been complex, addressing the macro as

well as the micro-environment of oppression. They know that being gay does not make them more "palatable" to Zionist settler-colonial ideology. And more and more queers around the world are also realizing that Israel's gay friendliness is part of its cultural propaganda, and they are denouncing pinkwashing as a smoke-and-mirrors move to cover up Israel's violations of the human rights of all Palestinians.

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**Nada Elia, Ph.D.**  
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- <sup>6</sup> With the exception of a very small fringe movement in Orthodox Judaism, the "Naturae Karta".
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- <sup>8</sup> See, for example, <http://www.bekhsoos.com/web/2010/04/palestinian-queers-for-bds-a-struggle-against-israel%E2%80%99s-colonization-occupation-and-apartheid/>
- <sup>9</sup> See the article written when the petition was successful, and IGLYO pulled out of Israel, at <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2011/victory-iglyo-moves-out-of-israel-2-7791>

## **International Conference “Arab Countries in Transition: Gender Rights & Constitutional Reforms”**

On June 23-25, the [Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World](#) organized an international conference titled “Arab Countries in Transition: Gender Rights and Constitutional Reforms,” in partnership with The Woman and Memory Forum- Egypt; Konrad Adenaur Stiftung, Rule of Law Program MENA Region; and The Danish Centre for Research and Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity (KVINFO). The conference, held at the Commodore Hotel in Beirut, Lebanon, brought together leading scholars in gender, legal, and social studies, as well as social workers, former ministers and UN ambassadors, and drafters of constitutions to discuss the very urgent question: what is to become of women, their rights, and their political participation in this moment of change sweeping the region?

Historical patterns of regime overthrows have shown that women’s rights usually undergo setbacks in moments of transition.

Indeed, despite their active and indispensable role in what has been termed the Arab Spring, women have been marginalized, disempowered, violently attacked, and sexually abused in the public sphere. Conference participants thus discussed constitutional and legal reforms that preempt such setbacks, as well as their practical application in everyday life.

Suad Joseph, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Women and Gender Studies at the University of California– Davis, gave the first keynote address where she theorized the idea of constitutions as stories we tell ourselves about who we are. These stories, she reminded us, are real and have material effects, and just as they constitute life, they can also shut down ways of being.

In the second keynote address, Hoda Elsadda, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University and co-founder and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Women and Memory Forum, spoke about her own experience as member of the 50-member committee that revised Egypt’s 2012 constitution in 2013, ratified in January of 2014. She detailed the complex politics involved in the negotiations, and

maintained that involving all components of Egyptian society in the committee is what ensured the democratization and overall acceptance of the new constitution.

Similarly, the constitutions of Yemen and Iraq are currently undergoing reform, and so participants in those processes spoke about the intricacies of those negotiations. Mona Al-Mahakeri, Sana’a University, Yemen, noted that the committee currently redrafting Yemen’s constitution is made up of sixteen members, four of which are women, ensuring that the future constitution would incorporate articles that address issues relevant to women, such as mortality rates, early marriage, and quotas for political participation.

Stepping away from constitutional reform, Awatif Ketiti, University of Valencia, Spain, questioned the problematic of gender, the body, and the state. She observed that the revolutions that have taken place across the Arab world have shown that religious currents and patriarchal institutions’ struggles for power take place over the female body, still considered a public affair. That struggle was evident in panels that discussed



**Group shot of the participants**

the outrageous gang rapes that took place in the very public space of Tahrir Square, raising the critical question: is there, or can there be, a public space for women? Other discussions of sites of this struggle included honor killings in Jordan and the most recent domestic violence law passed in Lebanon.

The role of religion and Islamic Law, or *Shari'a*, was another critical topic addressed at the conference. Zahra' Langhi, cofounder of the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace (LWPP) argued that *shari'a* cannot be reduced to instructions and prohibitions, as fundamentalists claim. Her approach wrests it from those who claim it is a known static law that is their prerogative to enforce. She insists that if rules and instructions are to be reached, they must come from a specific, scientific, and disciplined methodology already extant in the Islamic system, one that is dynamic and open to change. At the other end of this spectrum, Rachid Tlemçani from Algiers University

discussed the practical implications of *shari'a* law as understood by fundamentalists in Algeria.

Tlemçani described, for instance, how Muslim fundamentalists object to modern, secular women who work, go to school, and do not wear the *hijab*, as per *shari'a* articulated by the Islamic Salvation Front. As a result, he shows how even though the 31% female representation quota has been met (the UN advocated benchmark is 30%), social attitudes still perceive women as the guardians of religion and values.

Is the law, then, enough to protect women, their political and social rights, and, indeed, their bodies? This is one of the puzzles riddling the Arab world as sometimes, women's rights, livelihoods, and bodies are protected by the law, but these protections are not enforced because of social attitudes. Faheema Rzajj from the University of Baghdad, Iraq, for instance, maintained that 26% of women between the ages of ten

and thirty-years-old, regardless of education or urban or rural domiciles, consider male violence against women acceptable if not necessary.

In her keynote address, Elsadda asserted that constitutions themselves do not guarantee gender justice, but they do pave the way for it. Participants agreed that reforming constitutions is a step toward reforming social attitudes regarding women, alleviating gender injustices, and effecting actual rather than symbolic change in the region.

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## WHO IS SHE?

### Profiling: Faten Hamama



The role of Amneh, the maid, in the film *Du'a' al-Karawan* [The Nightingale's Prayer], 1959, was adopted from Taha Hussein's novel, directed by Henry Barakat, and played by Faten Hamama and Ahmad Mazhar (as the employer). In the film, the scene unravels:

He: You will make me feel regret.

She: What will regret serve?

He: I wish I had met you long ago, you would have taught me pity.

She: Learn pity from someone else. My heart is a stone.

He: Your heart is a stone? What hardened it?

She: Someone like you, whose aim is to entrap others.

He: Tell me, Amneh. Have you fallen in love before?

She: I had a sister, she fell in love and love killed her.

He: How so? Tell me!

She: I told you she fell in the trap and she who is dishonored, is sentenced to death.

He: And he who loved her, left her to die?

She: The hunter never thinks about the bird who fell; his only concern is the next prey.

He: But she is wrong, she did not protect her honor.

She: The bird is always wrong, while the hunter bears no blame. <sup>1</sup>

Faten Hamama (May 27, 1931) known as "*Sayyidat al-shasha al-arabiya*" (The lady of the Arabic screen) is an Egyptian actress highly acclaimed for her performances in a variety of film genres: comedies, tragedies, melodramas, and political thrillers.<sup>2</sup>

Faten started her career as an actor at the age of eight in a role with the famous musician Muhammad Abd al-Wahab, in the film "*Yawm Sa'id*" (A Happy Day, 1939). Soon after, Faten became part of the golden age of the Egyptian cinema industry of the 1950s and started playing leading roles in Yusuf Shaheen's films such as the famous "*Sira' fi-I Wadi*" (Struggle in the Valley, 1954) with actor Omar Al-Sharif. The film portrays the struggle between the feudal Pashas and the helpless peasants. After this movie, Faten married Omar al-Sharif, who played the leading role in the famous Hollywood film, *Dr. Zivago* (1965).

Faten worked with great producers such as Yusuf Wehbe "*Mala'ikat al-rahma*" (*Angels of Mercy*, 1956), Salah Abu Seif "*Lak yawm yazalim*" (Your Turn, You Tyrant Will Come, 1951) which was the film, that truly brought her fame; Khayri Bshara and Dawoud Abd al-Sayyid (Two films: "*Yawm murr... Yawm hilou*" (A Good Day and a Bitter Day) and "*Ard al-ahlam*" (The Land of Dreams)); Hassan al-Imam (twelve movies), and with Ezzeddin dhul Fiqar, her first husband. In all these movies, as the cinema critic Ibrahim al-Arees puts it, she played the helpless girl, the vicious daughter, the oppressed peasant, the clever maid, daughter of the poor or the rich, and in socially contradictory roles, especially after the 1952 revolution. Arees' opinion is that "the role that is quite dominant in Faten Hamama's acting career is the "weak" woman.<sup>3</sup> Jean Maqdissi has a similar opinion: "The characters Faten plays are almost always virtuous and basically innocent of any calculated wickedness and immorality",<sup>4</sup> although Faten believes that human beings "cannot be evil [or good] all the time".<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the victimized woman, Faten played the assertive and strong woman. In "*Sira' fi-I Wadi*" (Struggle in the Valley, 1954) Faten was portrayed as the Pasha's daughter who, contrary to stereotype, was an honest woman who fell in love with a peasant and defended the poor. In the film "*Ustadha Fatmah*" (*Miss Fatmeh*, 1952), Faten starred as a law student who believed women were as important as men in society. In "*Embaratoriyat Mim*" (The Mim Empire), she played the role of the widow who takes good care of her large family.

*More on page 10*

## ***Gender research in Iraq: Reality & expectations***

On June 26, 2014 the [Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World](#) (IWSAW) organized a roundtable on *Gender Research in Iraq: Reality and Expectations*, an initiative sponsored by Open Society Institute-International Women's Program. Building on a recently implemented project titled [Gender Training for Iraqi Academics & Researchers](#), the roundtable aimed to discuss the current status of gender research in the Arab world, with a special focus on Iraq. The discussion shed light on the importance of proposal writing in attracting research funding as well as the importance of networking with international and regional research centers, universities and NGOs.

Despite the unstable security situation in both Iraq and Lebanon, the roundtable succeeded in bringing together academics and researchers from Iraq, and Lebanon. The roundtable hosted *Dr. Suad Joseph*, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Women and Gender Studies at the University of California, Davis; *Dr. Hoda El-Sadda*, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Faculty

of Arts, Cairo University and head of the Freedoms and Rights Committee in the Constituent Assembly, Egypt; *Dr. Noha Bayoumi*, Professor of French Literature at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the Lebanese University; and *Dr. Nahla Al-Nadawi*, Professor at the college of Education for Women at the University of Baghdad. It also attracted researchers from Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen and Japan who attended the 3-day international conference (23-25 June, 2014) organized by IWSAW on *Arab Countries in Transition: Gender Rights & Constitutional Reforms*.

In Session One, *Dr. Nahla El-Nadawi* presented a historical overview of women and gender issues in Iraq whereby she highlighted successes as well as factors impeding progress. This presentation was followed by an insightful intervention by *Dr. Noha Bayoumi* who talked about the challenges faced by Lebanese researchers and the need to focus on our own indigenous problems. Then, *Dr. Hoda El-Sadda* whose long experience and background in women and gender issues led the discussion into inspiring eye-opening avenues.

The discussion revealed that the reality of gender studies in Iraq is very much similar to that of other Arab countries but with varying degrees. In most Arab countries, gender studies is still considered new and viewed with suspicion in society as well as within the academic circles.

Several participants from Iraq as well as from Lebanon maintained that they faced many challenges when they suggested integrating gender studies as a discipline into the academic curriculum. They eventually ended-up personally introducing gender issues and notions in their classes but not as part of a complete academic curriculum. According to an Iraqi participant, the concept of "gender" is viewed as a new trend imposed by the international community such as UN agencies and other international organizations. It is because of the pressure of international bodies and foreign countries that Iraq has accepted to discuss women's issues and to abide by the quota in parliament, otherwise, Iraq is not yet ready to give away much power to women.

Another challenge raised is the language barrier. Most of the available material on women and



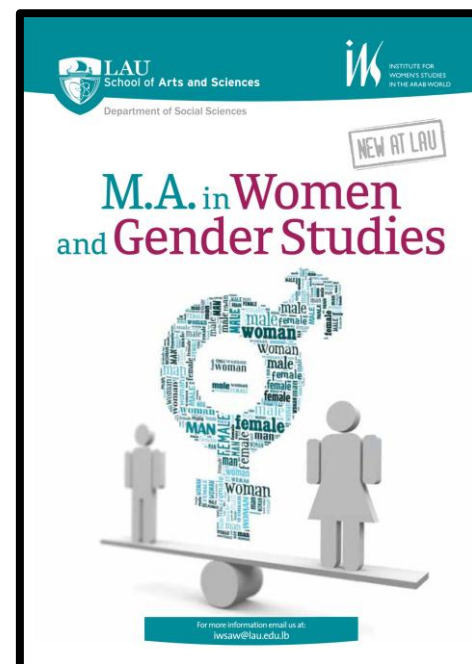
gender issues is either in English or other foreign languages. According to Dr. El-Sadda, the lack of material in Arabic is preventing societies from learning about the concept and hence is not allowing Arab societies to witness the impact of such knowledge in their daily lives. The language of instruction in most universities in the Arab world is Arabic, and hence, given the lack of material in Arabic on gender issues, professors and the students are unable to benefit from the rich production on women and gender issues available. Fortunately, there are some positive initiatives taking place in the Arab world, such as the portal housed by the Women and Memory Forum which posts literature related to gender (theory and methodology) in Arabic.

The discussion also addressed the quality of research at hand. All participants agreed that a great deal of research is being conducted in the Arab world, but there are major weaknesses in terms of research methodology and in terms of disaggregated data; not to mention the poor analysis of the data when it is at the disposal of researchers. The research focuses generally on stating and comparing facts and figures instead of an in-depth analysis of the data by relating it to the social or economic context. As a result, there

is no reliable data that NGOs, activists and policy experts can rely on to push policy makers towards change.

Finally, among the many other concerns raised during the discussion is the dire need to create research centers in the Arab world and the importance of allocating local funds to be able to produce research related to the local context. Dr. Lilia Labidi from Tunisia asserted that millions of dollars are invested in foreign universities to study the Levant, and maintained that Arab governments and rich Arab families should invest in creating such research centers in the Arab world to support researchers and academics.

In Session Two, Dr. Joseph shared with passion her extensive experience in proposal writing, and the need to fill this gap on gender research in the Arab world. Generating research in Arabic is essential at this point to accumulate data that is relevant to the context of each Arab country and in the Arabic language. Dr. Joseph emphasized the fact that if we believe in something and are passionate about it we should be able to convince funders of the validity and importance of our research proposals.



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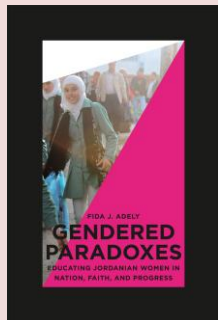
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## Highlights



**Gendered Paradoxes:  
Educating Jordanian  
Women in Nation, Faith,  
and Progress**

**Author:** Fida Adely  
**Year of publication:** 2012  
**Publisher:** The University of  
Chicago Press

In 2005 the World Bank released a gender assessment of the nation of Jordan, a country that, like many in the Middle East, has undergone dramatic social and gender transformations, in part by encouraging equal access to education for men and women. The resulting demographic picture there—highly educated women who still largely stay at home as mothers and caregivers—prompted the World Bank to label Jordan a “gender paradox.” In *Gendered Paradoxes*, Fida J. Adely shows assessment to be a fallacy, taking readers into the rarely seen halls of a Jordanian public school—the al-Khatwa High School for Girls—and revealing the dynamic lives of its students, for whom such trends are far from paradoxical.

Through the lives of these students, Adely explores the critical issues young people in Jordan grapple with today: nationalism and national identity, faith and the requisites of pious living, appropriate and respectable gender roles, and progress. In the process she shows the important place of education in Jordan, one less tied to the economic ends of labor and employment that are so emphasized by the rest of the developed world. In showcasing alternative values and the highly capable young women who hold them, Adely raises fundamental questions about what constitutes development, progress, and empowerment—not just for Jordanians, but for the whole world.

## WHO IS SHE?

### Profiling: Faten Hamama

These films helped to portray modern Egyptian women as courageous and capable of confronting difficult times, in socially transitional periods and crisis. Faten Hamama, moreover, addressed and criticized in her most influential film “*Uridu Hallan*” (I Want a Solution, 1974) the marriage and divorce laws in Egyptian Family codes. Although the right of a Muslim woman to divorce is as old as Islam, a law in Egypt that forbade *khul'*—a divorce initiated by the wife—was annulled later on, thanks to such awareness raising films and the efforts of women activists. These roles reveal Faten Hamama as unsympathetic towards old patriarchal norms and make her a successful example for Egyptian and Arab women in cinema and television.

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<sup>1</sup> Faten Hamama-plays the role of the maid (Amneh) who is speaking directly to master of the house, the engineer (Ahmad Mazhar), alluding to the way he took advantage of her sister who worked for him, fell in love with him and later was killed by her uncle – to wash off the disgrace - a norm practiced for defending the honor of the family or clan.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faten\\_Hamama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faten_Hamama)

<sup>3</sup> See Ibrahim Arees, “Lubnan karram ahama’a 60 amman mina-l fann, Faten Hamama: Fannana bi-hajm mu’assassat,” in *Majallat al-Wasat al-lundoniya*, 12 February 2001.

<sup>4</sup> See Jean Maqdissi, “Faten Hamama and Hind Rustum: Stars from Different Heavens” (*al-Raida*, Fall, 2008) p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> See Kuwait TV interview with Faten Hamama in “Ma’a fannan al-am, 1963” (Artist of the Year) on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2EkOePBVR8>.

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