

For activists and academics—and everyone in between

## Who said this?

“We peel the skin of our hands washing their clothes  
that they may be spotless white,  
No smile... No joy... No rest...  
for the glitter of a dagger... of a father...of a brother...  
is all eyes,  
Tomorrow who knows what deserts may banish you  
washing off disgrace!”

**Nazik al-Malā'ika**

## Opportunities

### Call for Papers

The editorial committee of *Al-Raida* invites submissions for the Summer/Fall 2013 non-thematic, double-blind, peer reviewed issue.

For more information kindly contact al-raida: [al-raida@lau.edu.lb](mailto:al-raida@lau.edu.lb)

### Call for Abstracts

The department of Gender Studies and the Department of sociology, Lund University, extend a warm invitation to all students and researchers in the field of development to submit abstracts for the 11<sup>th</sup> Development Research Day, entitled *Gendered Developments – Imaginings, Politics and Practices*.

**Submission Deadline: August 19, 2013.**

For more information you can visit: <http://www.sam.lu.se/drd>

### Call for Abstracts

The faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Balamand (Lebanon) invites you to participate in its international conference, *“Identity and Conflict in the Middle East and its Diasporic Cultures”*.

**Submission Deadline: October 1, 2013**



*The International Forum  
on Mediterranean  
Women's Rights in the  
Aftermath of the Arab  
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## Pioneering Lebanese Feminism: Documenting Alternative Civil War Narratives in *Al-Raida*

Nicole Khoury\*

In the 38 years since the start of the Lebanese civil war, the Lebanese state has yet to articulate a coherent national narrative of the war or establish projects that express collective public memory. Much of the text that frames Lebanese history and conflict fails to account for women's movements and contributions to historical events. Alternative personal narratives of the civil war articulating female roles in nation building can be found in the archives of *Al-Raida*, a feminist journal in Lebanon covering various aspects of the civil war period beginning with the journal's first year of publication in 1976. *Al-Raida* (meaning pioneer) is a quarterly journal published in English and in Arabic by the Institute for Women's

Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW), an institute housed at the Lebanese American University in Beirut, Lebanon. *Al-Raida's* first publication started in 1976, one year after the Lebanese civil war, and continues publishing today on various women's issues in the Middle East.

*Al-Raida* initially worked within the U.N.'s discourse on development and modernization programs in the Middle East, and later began to develop a more thorough understanding of the local needs of Lebanese women. At this time, the Lebanese civil war was well underway and *Al-Raida* responded to the immediate needs of the local women. Its attention to the U.N. international thematic years included redefining the Human Rights discourse

on children, the elderly, and dis/ability within the context of the Lebanese civil war<sup>1</sup>. Doing so allowed *Al-Raida* to relocate the discourse of international programs within a local context. More specifically, in 1982, *Al-Raida* began documenting trauma narratives and experiences of women during the war by seeking out participants for interview, conducting ethnographies, and publishing prose. The prolonged civil conflict and the inability of Human Rights discourse to aptly reflect the realities of the war, encouraged a shift in *Al-Raida's* discourse on women's political participation. Owing to the prolonged civil war, the Lebanese feminist movements made a shift in the way they see themselves from a global

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perspective to a local focus. Consequently, *Al-Raida* began to respond to the need for women's personal trauma stories to serve as valid means of narrating the civil war by publishing women's stories, interviews, and testimonies, essentially providing a liberatory space for women to make their claims for peace on a global scale. *Al-Raida's* attention to the particular situation of women in various situations, including women in the peace movement, reflects the journal's initiative to locate the counter-narratives and provide alternative stories of the civil war.

The journal publication exhibited increased attention to fiction pieces, literature, poetry, interviews, testimonies, and personal narratives from 1984-1987<sup>2</sup>. Documenting the narratives of women's experiences during the war serves as an argument for peace and political representation, as it depicts the devastating effects of war. Therefore, while it initially may seem as though *Al-Raida* abandoned political discourse in the journal, focusing more on narratives and less on informative political articles, it only shifted the type of articles published insofar as it began increasingly to value narratives that shared the war experience. This shift is not an arbitrary one; the turn from political articles of an informative and quantitative nature are abandoned in favor of narratives and qualitative articles that better reflect the lived-experiences of women enduring the civil war. The shift in the type of articles chosen for publication, from a research-based quantitative study to a more qualitative documentation of narratives, indicates a shift in journal rhetorical function, as well as its perception of the kinds of studies needed for the development of a feminist movement in Lebanon and underlines *Al-Raida's* increasing ability to respond to the nuances of the local; women's movement.

The issues published in 1984 reveal a shift towards a more narrative-style of articles. Increased articles on fiction, poetry, literature, media, theater and

the arts began to appear in *Al-Raida*. The development of political discourse to more literary and narrative forms, signified a move in the journal towards a more local experience of the war. The social turn in the 80s brought with it the acknowledgement that writers are part of larger discourse communities that are influenced by social, cultural and political factors. The war narratives published in *Al-Raida* are an example of the increasing awareness of the influence of the civil war on women writers, particularly writers who reflected on the war. A school of women writers known as the Beirut Decentrists<sup>3</sup>, wrote about the civil war between 1975 and 1982. Similar to the war narratives published in *Al-Raida*, the literary production of women novels arose from a need to document trauma and in so doing position themselves within the political discourse. The narratives documenting war narratives through interviews, ethnographies, and unpublished narratives, are a part of a larger literary move in which the documenting of daily war narratives was an essential concern of Lebanese women writers during this time.

The issues published in 1984 reflect the political discourse as it is developed in literary pieces and narratives. The narratives that reflect the war experience published in *Al-Raida* are an example of an increasing awareness of the influence of the civil war on women providing an effort to document, for future generations, a counter-narrative to the prevailing discourse on the civil war. The 30<sup>th</sup> issue includes an editorial by Wafa' Stephan, the co-editor of the journal during that period. Her editorial summarizes the activities of Lebanese women during the war and their efforts to establish peace. This issue is of particular importance in that it publishes interviews and testimonies by Lebanese women who actively sought peace and reconciliation during the war and presented testimonies by women who had remained in Lebanon as a form of resistance, while continuing to promote peace-building activities, and providing readers with a number of testimonial narratives. The editorial maintains that the issue explores and raises awareness on the role women have played in the

Lebanese war. If women have not participated in the war, in its decision-making process, or in the efforts to reach a reconciliation ("Women and War," 2), they have provided relief efforts, by attempting to "hold together the collapsing structures of Lebanese society"; protested together with social welfare organizations about the violation of Human Rights, attempting to "appease the fighters by paying visits to refugee camps and military headquarters and putting flowers in the nozzles of guns"; participating in national and international conferences on the problems facing Lebanon; organizing demonstrations and sit-ins, and storming "into the local TV station to interrupt the news in order to have their demands broadcast"<sup>4</sup> (Stephan, "Women and War," 2-3). Testimonies included those by Iman Khalifeh, Ilham Kallab, Juliette Haddad, Nazik Saba Yared, and Nuha Salib Salibi.

The increase in interviews at this juncture of the journal's publication reflects a desire to document testimonies and narratives not only by Lebanese women who experienced the war but by various women in the Middle East. Thus, the journal's staff began to conduct interviews as a valid method of gathering information and highlighting the experiences of women. Furthermore, articles on the meetings with other women during research trips, written by Evelyn Accad and Wafa' Stephan appeared in this issue as a means of communicating the collaboration between various women's groups across the Middle East in an ethnographic-style narrative. The articles are written as ethnographies, and research observations, what appears to be a method of sharing the lessons and experiences of the authors with the readers of *Al-Raida*. While some of the information for the biographical articles is gleaned from already published books and articles that have been translated, much of the information is the result of face to face exchanges conducted by *Al-Raida* staff and original articles contributed to *Al-Raida*. Not surprisingly, literary publications by women about their experiences during the war began to appear during this time. Stephan's editorial<sup>5</sup> maintains that the literary works of Lebanese women have gained national

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and international recognition<sup>6</sup>. Those who have gained international recognition include Andrée Chedid, Nadia Tueni, Etel Adnan, and Evelyne Accad.<sup>7</sup> Women who were read locally included Sonia Beyruti, May Menassa, Marie-Therese Arbid, Irene Mosalli, and Claire Gebeily. *Al-Raida* continued to publish thematic issues again in 1987, such as women and work, development, the environment, liberation, domestic abuse, etc. and currently continues to publish qualitative and quantitative research. The initial ten-year period of the journal constitutes the formative years of the development of the contemporary feminist movement and thought in Lebanon in which *Al-Raida* was not only rhetorically constructed by international and local women's movements but also functioned as a means of sustaining and shaping the discourse on Lebanese and Arab feminism. *Al-Raida* remains an integral part of Lebanese women's history, illustrating the ways women have collaboratively engaged in attending to issues faced by Lebanese women and Arab women during this time. The example of *Al-Raida* shows us that in constructing historical representations of women, it is imperative to locate the counter-narratives of women's experiences, and provide the future with alternative stories.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the U.N.'s Year of the Disabled Persons in 1981 included increased attention to dis/ability in developing countries and published articles on the dis/abled in Lebanon directly affected by the war, including women, men and children.

<sup>2</sup> IWSAW has recently made [Al-Raida's archives](#) available on their [website](#).

<sup>3</sup> term coined by Miriam Cooke in *War's Other Voices*.

<sup>4</sup> While the article mentions in a footnote that this did occur between 7-10 of July 1983, no further information is provided.

<sup>5</sup> "Women and War in Lebanon," 2.

<sup>6</sup> The increased attention to women's literary publications during and after the Lebanese war during this time is treated in the 32nd issue of *Al-Raida*, the thematic issue on "Arab Women and Literature," which introduces the literary achievements of Arab women.

<sup>7</sup> Accad also contributed various articles in *Al-Raida*.

### NGO Highlight

#### Democratic Association of Moroccan Women

**The Democratic Association of Moroccan Women (ADFM)** is an autonomous, feminist, and non-profit organization that started in 1985. Its mission is to promote women's human rights at all levels: civil, political, socioeconomic, and cultural.

To know more about ADFM you can click on the link below

[Democratic Association of Moroccan Women](#)

#### Call for Papers *Women and the Arab Spring*

Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, Professor of Political Science at Southeastern Louisiana University, is assembling an edited volume about women's roles in the political and social movements of the Arab Spring, how women's participation has been received, their expectations and accomplishments thus far (or lack thereof), and case studies of women's political activities in the specific countries affected by the Arab Spring.

This book is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of women's mobilization and participation in the resistance movements of the contemporary Middle East and examine the results of their efforts.

Deadline for 500-word abstracts with 150-word author biographies is **August 1, 2013**. For more information kindly visit the following link:

<http://www.langinnovate.msu.edu/announce/show.cgi?ID=204048>

### Want to Share your Thoughts & News?

#### Write to Us!

We are interested in articles, announcements, conference reports, workshop updates, film-screenings, and social initiatives related to women and gender issues in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond.

Please e-mail: [amewsbulletin@gmail.com](mailto:amewsbulletin@gmail.com)

## The International Forum on Mediterranean Women's Rights in the Aftermath of the Arab Uprisings – Fez, Morocco



During the political mobilization phases of the Arab uprisings, women belonging to different political parties, ideologies, ethnicities, age groups, and religious backgrounds, all joined forces and were active participants in the revolutions where they lobbied for change and were instrumental in bringing their demands to the forefront. In light of the above, the ISIS Center For Women and Development in partnership with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung found it imperative to organize an International Forum on Mediterranean Women's Rights in the Aftermath of the Arab Uprisings.

The Forum that took place from June 21-23, 2013 at the Palais des Congrès, in Fez, was instrumental in bringing feminist concerns to the forefront and highlighting

the challenges that ensued for feminist academics, activists, and politicians in the wake of the Arab uprisings. It hosted participants from different countries around the globe, namely Algeria, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, France, Iran, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, the Netherlands, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States of America, and Yemen.

The panels that were spread out over a three-day period discussed issues related to: equality of sexes in the new constitutions; Islam and women's rights; women, media and international networking; feminist discourse in the region (secular/liberal and Islamic feminisms); women's political participation; women's economic empowerment, their cultural rights as well as their public/individual freedoms. Among the major concerns that were addressed during the forum were the political Islamization of the MENA region and the conservative backlash women's rights activists are facing in the aftermath of the revolutions.

The highly informative presentations along with the debates and discussions that ensued sketched a vivid picture about the situation of Arab women after the revolutions. The keynote speaker Dr. Valentine Moghadam, in her presentation, discussed the role of women in revolutions from a historical/comparative perspective, shed light on the revolutions that took place in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, and Syria and described in detail what a "genuine democracy with women's participation and rights might look like".

The conference concluded its sessions by emphasizing the importance of protecting women's rights in the MENA region and preserving the achievements that the Arab uprisings have attained. It called for supporting projects that promote local and regional partnerships; mobilizing efforts to come up with solutions for common or specific problems women in the Mediterranean region suffer from; adopting a global approach to the political, civil, social, economic, and cultural rights of women; safeguarding the implementation of constitutions that guarantee gender equality; involving schools and media in the promotion of awareness and in the education of women and men; engaging the civil society in the implementation of public policies; and encouraging dialogue between feminist activists in the Mediterranean region while taking into consideration the specificities of each country.

Myriam Sfeir

### WHO IS SHE?

#### Profiling: Nazik al-Malā'ika

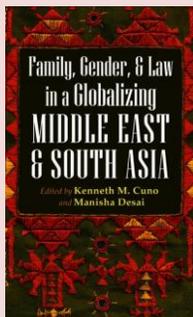
Nazik al-Malā'ika (1923- 2007) an Iraqi poetess, was crowned as the princess of modern Arabic poetry for half a century. She is also acclaimed by many literary critics to be *the first Arab to break away from the classical form of the Arabic Qasida (poem) and lead the movement of "Modern Arabic Verse", al-shi'r al-hurr*.

The new free form appeared in her first collection, *Ashiqat al-Layl (Mistress of The Night)*, Baghdad, (1947); later to be followed by many poems. Al-Malā'ika has contributed tremendously to modern literary criticism. Her critical writings appeared in many influential journal, including *al-Adāb, Shi'r, al-Adib*. Her complete anthology of poetry and prose writings were collected in four volumes and published by al-Majlis al-a'la lil-thaqafa fi Misr in Cairo, 2002.

Nāzik al-Malā'ika was an advocate of social reform; she criticized even in poetry the prevalent honor crimes committed within her society. In her poem "Ghasslan lil-ār" (1949), al-Malā'ika revealed the double standard of men who started the custom and set the rules.

Prepared by Dr. Hosn Abboud

## Highlights



### Family, Gender, & Law in a Globalizing Middle East and South Asia

**Editors:** Kenneth M. Cuno & Manisha Desai

**Publisher:** Syracuse University Press

**Language:** English

**Year of Publication:** 2009

The essays in this collection examine issues of gender, family, and law in the Middle East and South Asia. In particular, the authors address the impact of colonialism on law, family, and gender relations; the role of religious politics in writing family law and the implications for gender relations; and the tension between international standards emerging from UN conferences and conventions and various nationalist projects. Employing the frame of globalization, the authors focus on how local and global forces interact and influence the experience and actions of people who engage with the law.

By virtue of a "south-south" (Middle East & South Asia) comparison of two quite similar and culturally linked regions, contributors avoid positing "the West" as a modern telos. Drawing upon the fields of anthropology, history, sociology, and law, this volume offers a wide-ranging exploration of the complicated history of jurisprudence with regard to family and gender.

### 15 Years of Prison for Beating His Wife to Death

May 23, 2013 is a day to remember all victims who have suffered from domestic violence!

The head of the criminal court in the Southern province of Lebanon; judge Roula Jadayel, has issued a 15 year prison verdict against Mouen Dimashk (41 year-old) for beating his wife Amina Baydoun (18 year-old) to death on January 3, 2009, and demanding compensation of one hundred million Lebanese Lira, to her family.

The verdict came out after Amina's parents, Abdallah Baydoun and Mona Ghandour filed a lawsuit against Mouen accusing him of killing their daughter at her house in the State of Mozambique. The public trial revealed that before marrying Amina, Mouen was married to Ahlam A. and another African woman. Both divorced him on account of domestic violence.

In July 2009, Mouen married his cousin Amina who went to live with him in Mozambique. Soon marital disagreements broke out between them, and Mouen started beating his wife constantly, and treating her violently in the presence of his children and with the knowledge of his brother, who was living nearby. On the day of her death, Amina was taken to Nampula Central Hospital where she died. The medical report issued by the hospital, and which Mouen presented to the court, indicates the presence of a cavity on the left and right side of the head with white foam coming out of the mouth and nose, in addition to old and new bruises of different sizes, in the thoracic cavity, and on the feet and upper limbs and the knees. Nevertheless, the report concluded that Amina committed suicide by taking an overdose of drugs for hypertension. Yet, judge Jadayel did not take into consideration the report because it was based on information provided by the family and not as a result of autopsy (since the body was not subject to autopsy). The trial hearings included Mouen's brother who admitted that the latter is sadistic, and when Amina was hospitalized he saw bruises on her forehead, and head, and her face was swollen. The nephew also acknowledged that he repeatedly witnessed incidents of abuse against Amina.

Finally, trials proved that Amina's cause of death was due to the beatings and torture she was subjected to. What also helped in convicting Mouen, was his escape from Mozambique after the death of his wife and his absence during the transfer of the body to Lebanon. Weeks later, Mouen returned secretly to Lebanon, but was arrested at Beirut international airport. He was detained for 20 months before the court accepted his release request, which was another opportunity (and still is) for him to escape the Lebanese territory for an unknown destination.

\*Khalil, A. (2013, June 4). In 15 years for beating his wife to death [al-sijin 15 a`man li-mu`annif zawjatahu hatta al-mawt]. *Al-Akhbar*. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/184344>

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