



INTERVIEW WITH

LENA M. MEARI

(Palestinian researcher at Birzeit University)

SANDRA BLASCO LISA

Zaragoza/Birzeit, 14 de julio 2024

We are in a context of multiple crises. Among them, one of the most problematic is the war crisis, nuclear proliferation, and the rearmament of some of the world's most powerful countries, in terms of economy and military investments. China has become the world's largest economy, allied with countries like Russia or Iran. Meanwhile, the United States seeks to strengthen its influence by dragging Europe into a policy of rearmament and confrontation with Russia and China. This leads us to a situation of threat of world war.

91

In addition to this, we are experiencing a situation of discredit due to the incoherence of Western discourses on human rights and peace regarding the policies carried out by European countries led by the United States and NATO in other parts of the world. Also from academia, from the sources of knowledge creation in Europe, there is a certain disconnection and a lack of critical studies on the consequences of the policies that our countries carry out in other parts of the world.

We believe that feminism, which in countries like Spain has gained a remarkable stance, must advance in an international feminist solidarity that impacts the violence suffered by populations in other countries. One of the most glaring examples today is the case of arm sales and international support for Israel. Since the creation of this state in 1948, with the argument that it is the only consolidated democracy in the region, the violation of human rights is omitted.

In Europe and in Spain, there is misinformation about the history of Palestine and Israel, and the ma-

jority of the population, influenced by the discourse of political parties and the media, still believes that what happened on October 7th is the beginning of a war between two sides.

We must work scientifically, publishing papers with a gender and feminist perspective, but always keeping our feet on the ground in line with the objectives, perspective, and values that prevail in our work with the reality we experience in our context. Feminism is diverse; it has multiple forms of expression. Not all feminisms are pacifist, but certainly feminism has not been characterized by advocating for war, much less for defending genocide or the massacre of civilian populations, knowing that it is elderly people, women, and children who make up the majority and suffer the ravages of violence. Therefore, we believe it is appropriate for this issue to incorporate the perspective of someone from the Palestinian scientific community, so that they can convey the reflections and lines of thought that exist in the women's institutes of universities in the Arab world in the face of the current situation. These are aspects that allow us to better connect with those other realities outside of Europe that are sometimes difficult to access.

For this purpose, we have spoken with Lena Meari, born in Haifa to a refugee family from Al-Birweh village which was destroyed in 1948. Lena is an assistant professor of Sociocultural Anthropology/Feminist Theory and Research at the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University.

Dear Lena, How are you? Thank you for accepting this conversation.

I appreciate your initiating this conversation at this historic moment for the Palestinian people, for the region and the world.

We are living in a defining moment that reveals the observable Zionist genocidal acts perpetrated against the Palestinian people, as well as the underlying, non-observable structural cruelty of the Zionist settler colonial order supported by imperial capitalist



powers. Israel's current ongoing atrocities not only aim to destroy all aspects of Palestinians' present life, but also their future. Since October 7th Israel have killed, to date, 45,045 Palestinian men, women and children, injured 110,888, displaced 2,000,000, arrested and brutally tortured 16,900 and damaged 227,591 housing units (PCBS 2024). It has also damaged and destroyed all schools, universities, hospitals, bakeries, mosques, workplaces and cultural centers. These atrocities prove that the Zionist settler colonial system is a brutal violence machine ready and capable, at any moment, to initiate acts of extermination against the colonized people of Palestine when they actively resist their more than seventy-five years of colonialism.

The situation at this historical moment, as the world watches on air the procession of the total vicious destruction of material, cultural and biological lives of Palestinians, is extremely hard to bear, but what makes it possible to endure this scale of devastation, is the profound aspirations for freedom and the organic relation of Palestinians to their land that has always existed among Palestinians and the oppressed peoples. The persistent struggle for a liberated future and the *sumud* (steadfastness) enacted by the Palestinian people

in the face of extermination is what provides us with resilience, solidity and hope.

I know it's difficult to condense and summarize everything that has historically happened to your people, but how do you see this situation? Can you explain to us what has happened since the creation of the state of Israel and the current situation in Palestine? What is Zionism?

The personal story of each Palestinian has dimensions that condense and narrate the historical collective brutal injustices the Palestinian people endured and their heroic *sumud* in facing these injustices.

Instead of trying to list the atrocities that have been and are being committed in Palestine since the violent and forceful introduction of Zionism onto the land and people of Palestine, as well as the crimes of British colonialism that preceded it and enabled its fulfilment, I will approach these crimes through my personal story.

My family originated from Al-Birweh village in the Palestinian Galilee, nine kilometers from the coastal city Akka. The village was attacked and destroyed by the Zionist forces on June 24, 1948. Its inhabitants were uprooted and forcibly expelled from their land and became refugees either in nearby villages in the Galilee or in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. On its ruins the Zionists established two Jewish settlements to replace its indigenous Palestinians, who are still struggling to return to their land.

My village is one of 530 Palestinian villages and cities destroyed by the Zionist forces during the Nakba- a term used to refer to the Zionist criminal operation of uprooting the indigenous people of Palestine and the conquering of their lands through massacres, destruction, dispossession and expulsion of 800,000 Palestinians, replacing them with settlers and announcing the creation of Israel on the ruins of the Palestinians' lands that embraced their mode of being. Israel, backed by European and then American capitalist imperial powers that considered it as colonial base in the midst of the Arab region, created a

fictitious legal web to continue the project of confiscating the remaining Palestinian lands within its then declared borders.

Because elimination and expansionism are essential tools for settler colonialism, the Zionist colonial project continued to expand in 1967 with the occupation of the remaining parts of Palestine (West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem) as well as parts of Arab countries (The Egyptian land of Sinai and the Syrian Golan), displacing 300,000 Palestinians, some of them for the second time. This means that a large portion of Gaza's population that are being killed and displaced by Israel today are displaced from their original villages and cities.

The Nakba led to the fragmentation of the Palestinians. Some Palestinians remained on their land and were subjected to Israeli military rule that continued until 1966. Some Palestinians are living under Israeli military rule in the West Bank and Gaza, some Palestinians live in Jerusalem as residents threatened by expulsion, and some Palestinians are in diaspora.

Like my entire generation, I embodied the agonies and hardships of the Nakba through the stories of our grandmothers and grandfathers, who witnessed the destruction of their lives, the forceful cut off from their lands and the mode of life it entailed. The Nakba is not a historical event but a continuing structure that conditions the material and subjective forms of life under Zionism as a settler colonial order. The Zionist institutions, policies, practices and relations toward the colonized are structurally organized according to eliminatory logic which takes multiple forms that resembles genocide, ethnic cleansing and apartheid. The current war against my people across the Palestinian colonized geography, and specifically in Gaza is the continuation of the settler colonial racist logic which considers the indigenous Palestinians as sub humans and a constant potential threat worth of killing, torture and elimination.

The Zionist settler colonial logic of elimination and expansion is constantly pursued through the processes of war and "peace". Following the Oslo accords between Israel and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), that its first agreement

(Declaration of Principles) signed in 1993, the Jewish settlements on Palestinian lands proliferated. At the time of the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, there were approximately 110,000 settlers in the West Bank and around 140,000 in East Jerusalem. Today, about 30 years later, there are about 465,000 settlers in the West Bank, residing in around 300 settlements and outposts. In East Jerusalem, there are approximately 230,000 settlers, in addition to about 3,000 who are residing within Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem (Peace Now 2023).

In this sense, Zionism is an eliminatory expansionist colonial ideology, that is a heir of European colonial modernity, specifically its mode of settler colonialism. The inception of Zionism, its realization in the form of the settler colonial State of Israel, its historical and current trajectory is only possible through the elimination of the colonized Palestinians.

The Palestinian people suffer multiple legal violence in their daily lives, the denial of culture and traditions by the State of Israel... From outside Palestine, it's hard to imagine the effects of a military, colonial regime, of daily repression. How is life lived under this oppression? What is the day-to-day like?

"Legal violence" is one form of oppression that Palestinians face. The law, the judiciary system, the prison, the academic institution, the curricula and the media are among the other multiple apparatuses that enable the implementation of the comprehensive Zionist settler colonial project of elimination, dispossession, displacement, control, and subjugation of Palestinians and affect the details of the reality and daily lives of Palestinians.

Being colonized is a fragile positionality that exposes the colonized to multiple forms of atrocities manifested in the constant dispossession of your land and preventing you from accessing what remained of it, controlling your resources, surrounding your cities and villages with walls, checkpoints and roadblocks, being prevented from accessing your farms. Being

colonized means being a constant hostage subject to mass imprisonment, torture, and captivity at any time. It also means you are subject to repeated attempts to shape your consciousness to submit to the colonial reality.

Despite the reification of evil in the brutal day to day life of Palestinians today, it is worth noting that vicious maneuvers of the genocidal colonial project are not necessarily a complete project, as the aspirations for liberation is part and parcel of the consciousness, conscience, mode of being and practices of Palestinians in all their colonized geographies. For instance, Palestinian political captives who had been subject to mass imprisonment and torture had historically turned their prison walls into revolutionary castles, resistance spaces and popular universities. From within the walls of prisons and its harsh material conditions, the community of Palestinian captives invented creative means to develop an educational system, organizational structures and communication networks within and beyond the colonial prisons. The achievements of the Palestinian prisoners' movement were gained through a long process of struggle that entailed suffering, sacrifice and hope.

Hence, in the details of daily colonized lives of Palestinians we notice the effects of brutal oppression as well as, the effects of the refusal to surrender. Colonial atrocities had constantly incited its negation reflected in Palestinians' steadfastness, perseverance and resistance.

What does it mean to you to be a Palestinian woman? Tell us about your life. What gender differences does this oppression have?

The formation of my subjectivity as a Palestinian-woman embodies multiplicities and transformations. My subjectivity as Palestinian-woman is shaped by historical-material structures of power as well as my personal and collective struggle against these intersectional structures of power.

I am Palestinian as part of the colonial grievances that my people face. At the same time, I am the

product of my class position on the one hand and my class stance on the other. I am also a product of gender power dynamics and relations that shift over time. My subjectivity as a Palestinian woman is shaped by these intertwined structural oppressive colonial, class and gender power relations and my personal and collective agential resistance to them.

To approach gender differences in the Palestinian context we need to employ a historical analytical approach that assist us to focus on observable gender differences present in the Palestinian reality today while clarifying how gender norms and relations in Palestinian society, as in other societies, have changed throughout history, as they are not fixed or rigid, but rather transform in response to political, social and economic changes that occur in society.

“From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”. What does this mean for you? What do you think about the solution of “creating two states”?

“From the river to the sea Palestine will be free” as a chant signifies the negation of the multiple forms of colonial oppressions Palestinians from the river to the sea confronted and continue to confront under Zionist settler colonialism. In colonial situations the aspiration for liberation from all forms of oppression is an aspiration for a liberated and free future.

Regarding the discursive political slogan of “two states solution”, the on the ground reality of settler colonial expansionism turns it into political delusion. The unceasing land expropriation, uprooting of Palestinians, besieging them in walled spaces and the proliferation of Jewish settlements on Palestinian lands turn the “commitment to the two state solution” into repetitive empty slogan employed by the U.S official regime to cover-up its financial and military support to the continuation and consolidation of the Zionist settler-colonial project implemented by Israel in the material reality. The recent rejection of the Israeli Knesset of the establishment of a Palestinian state, which was voted for by overwhelming majority means that extermination and wiping out Palestinians is the final aim.

Always armed resistance against the occupation is considered. Are there women’s groups in this resistance?

From a conceptual anti-colonial standpoint, as the theorist-struggler Frantz Fanon explicated more than sixty years ago, revolutionary violence has political and psychological function. On the political level, the systematic logic and practices of colonialism are based on violence and continue through violence, hence it can only be stopped by counter-revolutionary violence. On the psychological level, to be liberated from the subjective positionality of the subjugated colonized and the psychological distortion resulting from living for long period under racist, superior colonialism, is only possible through revolutionary violence.

The Palestinian history witnessed the resort to revolutionary violence and anti colonial armed resistance since the British colonization of Palestine. The involvement of women in armed resistance at that period and the secret women’s armed groups were mainly exposed by oral history held by Palestinian feminists such as Faihaa Abdulhadi, Janan Abdo and others who conducted oral history interviews with some of the women involved in these groups. Some of these groups are “Al-Qassam Companions” which included female students who were trained to carry weapons by Al-Qassam in 1930 in Haifa, as well as “The Black Palm” organization, which was active in the Jerusalem area and some of its members were arrested and tried in military courts. In addition to “Zahrat Al-Uqhuwan” group, which was active in the year of the Nakba in the Jaffa region. Oral history also revealed the roles of peasant women in transporting arms to revolutionaries before and during the Nakba.

Following the Nakba and the establishment of the PLO in 1964, women joined the various political organizations, including their military sections. Shadia Abu Ghazaleh, Fatima Bernawi, Lila Khaled, Dalal Almoghribi, Tarek Halasi are among the most known. Women engaged also in popular and armed resistance during the first and second intifadas. Recently, during



96

the prisoners exchange deal on November 2023, we witnessed women in Al-Qassam brigades military uniform.

Were there feminist women's groups before the occupation? What were their demands?

Historically, Palestinian women participated in anti-colonial liberation struggle and had established various women's movements. The involvement of Palestinian women in organized political activism goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century. This involvement began in 1921 when the first Palestinian women's union was created in Jerusalem, under British colonization and came to exemplify the organic link between national liberation and social struggle (Kuttab 2009, 104). Palestinian women's activism had been since then, linked to the Palestinian anti-colonial liberation struggle. This wasn't an exception, as in her classic book *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third*

World Kumari Jayawardena (2016) traces the women's movements in the third world and argues that feminism had originated from the specific struggles of women against colonialism. This means that the emergence of women's movements and women's activism was not instigated out of pure gender agendas. Nevertheless, as Frantz Fanon (1965) reveals in his analysis of the Algerian revolution against the long-lasting French colonialism in Algiers, the Algerian woman and her position had transformed as a result of her revolutionary commitment. Fanon asserts that the radical change during the revolutionary anti colonial war "could not occur without having profound repercussions on the other components of Algerian family life", society and the cultural values (Fanon 1965, 98).

Hence, despite the fact that the Palestinian women's movements and their attempt to mobilize women emerged out of national liberation desires and commitments, it had affected a change in Palestinian women's gender roles and resulted in their empowerment.

The political participation of Palestinian women did not stop after the Nakba, despite the devastating conditions of the Palestinian people who became scattered and separated from their homeland. Between the years 1948 and 1967 Palestinian women initiated charitable organizations aiming at supporting the orphans and elders as well as the families affected by the expulsion. These organizations had also worked with Palestinian poor women aiming at integrating them in vocational trainings. After the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, women activists had established the Palestinian women's general union as a popular organization working with women on social-economic issues and mobilizing them to participate in the liberation struggle.

Following the Israeli occupation of the remaining parts of Palestine in 1967, Palestinians, specifically during mid 70s and 80s had established an extraordinary network of grassroots organizations and community level committees, including student and youth organizations, workers' unions, women's committees, and voluntary work committees. The emergence and proliferation

of these mass organizations reflected a sense of community and collective responsibility. They were “open, semi-legal structures, designed to mobilize and work among specific sectors within the population”, through recruiting new membership and engaging in sustained effort to widen the social base of their membership and constituency” (Taraki 1989, p. 433). They become an organic component of the national liberation movement and the liberation struggle.

When the first Palestinian Intifada (uprising) erupted in 1987, it was these grassroots organizations and community groups that carried out and sustained the struggle and provided the needed social and economic support to victims of political and military violence (Makkawi 2009, 78). The Intifada reflected not only a revolution against the colonizer, but also a social revolution in its own right, in which “women rebelled against their traditional place in a patriarchal society” (Hiltermann 1991, 48). It is worth noting though, that the women rebellion against patriarchy had been enabled and legitimized through its links with the Palestinian national liberation struggle.

Women’s activism during the Intifada had been organized and mobilized by four women’s committees each linked to different political faction that composed the Palestinian national liberation movement. Women committees had thousands of members including educated, urban middle class women, housewives and working women (Hilterman 1988, 50; Taraki 1989). The women committees had organized demonstrations and confrontations with the military occupying forces, and their demands included national, class and women liberation. Women’s committees had also established women’s productive cooperatives that contributed immensely to economic self-sufficiency (what was called *sumud* economy) during the Intifada. The women’s mass-based organizations had crucial role in consciousness-raising and delivering much needed services in areas of health, education, agricultural extension, and daycare (Hammami 1995, 55).

The signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 constituted a rupture in the history of the Palestinian strug-

gle for liberation. The Oslo accords not only changed the Palestinian liberation project into a “state building” project amid the continuation of the colonial rule, it also transformed the political culture of Palestinians in the West Bank and their organizational structures. One of the main post-Oslo transformations was reflected in the NGOization of political activism or what Rema Hammami (1995) calls “the professionalization of politics”. Throughout the post-Oslo years, the Palestinian mass organizations (including the women committees) were deliberately invaded by overseas funding from Western capitalist countries. Rather than having the opportunity to develop their own social and economical infrastructure, Palestinians were taken hostages by funding conditional upon satisfying Western capitalist demands which had penetrated the community from the top down, including the Palestinian Authority itself. With a widespread network of funded Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating throughout the Palestinian community, the old grassroots voluntary organizations simply disappeared from the map (Makkawi 2009, 78).

The transformation of mass-based, voluntary organizations into more elite, professional and politically autonomous institutions was a complex process in which a variety of forces were at play (Hammami 1995, 56). The main pitfall of this transformation was the dependence on foreign funders and foreign donors who put political conditionality on their funding. This political conditionality tended to fall in with the interests of the professionals within organizations who wanted to find means of asserting more control over priorities and ways of working. More importantly, donor and NNGO support accelerated a shift that was already under way from what had been the radically informed ideologies of a mass movement to discourses more narrowly defined in terms of development (Hammami 1995, 56).

According to Eileen Kuttub (2008), The emerging phenomenon of feminist NGOs during the post-Oslo years played a prominent and highly controversial role in sustaining feminist organizations as a women’s



98

movement. These NGOs have come to denote particular kinds of groups with orientations and practices distinct from those of the historic women's groups of the 1970s and 1980s. During the early 1990s, as women's NGOs grew and proliferated, they started to play a prominent role in transforming the local women's agenda. Growing numbers of specialized and professional feminist NGOs dedicated themselves to intervening in national and international policy processes, as the movement's leadership sought to use this opportunity to impact new national policies through specialized and professional work. Consequently, they became more noticeable on the national map because they received funds from bilateral and multilateral agencies. They adopted a new agenda, more oriented to policy and advocacy, which provided expertise to international and national organizations for the preparation of official documents and assessment reports. This structural transformation of women's activism further detached women's issues from broader national issues, depoliticizing women's rights.

Nevertheless, amid the continuation of settler colonial eliminatory policies and the deteriorating conditions, a more revolutionary discourse and new independent feminist groups had emerged. This discourse and groups adopted a de-colonial feminist approach seeking to struggle against all forms of oppressions constraining women's lives and opening possibilities for emancipatory future.

What is a woman? What is feminism to you?

Which female authors have been most influential for you? Do you participate in any women's or feminist groups or movements in your city or at Birzeit University?

Women are not abstract subjects. They are historical subjects contextualized in their material conditions and constrained by intersected structures of oppression and exploitation at the local and global levels which include colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, racism, white supremacy and patriarchy. These structures of power are intertwined and create multiple and transforming formations of masculinities and femininities. These formations and the working and implications of entangled structures of oppression need to be studied and analyzed in nuanced ways and in context.

A nuanced analysis is often distorted by Orientalist-colonialist and Eurocentric forms of knowledge production which portray women of the global South in general and Palestinian women in particular in unified-homogeneous way as passive victims of their culture and religion neglecting the effects of material colonial and economic factors that shape their life conditions.

Women of the South, and Palestinian women are heterogenous category constructed by their race, class and gender. They are also active actors not merely passive victims. They engage in resisting the specific and intertwined forms of oppression and

exploitation that limit their life opportunities and their liberation as well as the liberation of their communities and people.

Hence, I had never been concerned with the term woman, rather in historical material women. From within my material context, I am concerned with Palestinian women within the settler colonial order they live in. To approach their multiple situated positionalities, I adopt a decolonial stand and decolonial feminist theoretical and methodological frames of analysis. In contrast with most writings on Arab women's conditions, which adopt analytical frameworks that overlook the structural basis of women's oppression, a decolonial feminist approach seeks to grasp the visible aspects of domination and oppression while simultaneously exposing the structural nature of these oppressions. This dual process assists us to make sense of their experiences and struggles under conditions of war and settler colonialism in late capitalism, and lays the ground for formulating a transformative feminist methodological approach that contextualizes and historicizes the broader specific form of colonialism they were born into.

Instead of being influenced by specific theorists, I am influenced by decolonial emancipatory ideas that could assist in decolonizing feminism.

You have taught in California and you are a professor in the West Bank. Have you felt closer to Western professional deontology or to Arab deontology? Maybe it's something you haven't thought about.

I had been interested in thinking what theoretical frames we employ in our research, how we position ourselves within the matrix of power in the specific historical conditions we live in and do research, and how do we reflect our political, and ethical commitments while doing research. These questions are related to the epistemological and political aspects of knowledge production and praxis. These questions drive me to constantly decolonize my mind from hegemonic Eurocentric-colonial deontology.

What lines of work are you developing at the Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University? Are you working to reclaim the women who had to leave since the Nakba of 1948? How do you recover the memory of refugees?

There are various research interests and academic works among the members of the Institute of Women's Studies (IWS) at Birzeit University. Nevertheless, our collective interest in confronting feminist co-optation and backlash comprised the main theme of IWS last conference held on June 2023.

The conference discussed the various contemporary forms of colonialism, neoliberalism, and anti-feminism that feminist struggles in the Arab world, and the global south in general, confront; how feminism has been co-opted (in both its imperial liberal and globalized forms) in the service of projects that are counter to the basic principles of liberatory feminisms that strive to overturn racial, class, and colonial domination; how ideas and rhetoric rooted in feminism have been taken up to further goals of capitalist exploitation and inequality, imperial domination and colonial dispossession, and led to a belief among some that neoliberalism offers women new forms of feminist liberation, on the one hand, and to a conservative backlash against feminist ideas based on accusations that it is in the service of imperialism and colonialism, on the other. Within this frame, we asked: what are the possibilities for feminist struggles in formulating through theory and practice strategies to confront contemporary neoliberal-globalized and colonial projects? The conference's panels considered three challenges: the entangled histories of feminism and colonialism in the global south; neoliberalism, globalized institutions, and the confiscation of women's liberation; popular anti-feminist backlash.

During the current ongoing genocidal war, IWS had engaged in an initiative of collecting and publishing women's testimonials from Gaza – an initiative that has built relationships and networks with women in Gaza as well as anti-imperialist feminists internationally. Building on earlier work of the Institute, particularly

in its journal, *Review of Women's Studies*, where testimonials by women in Gaza were published during earlier Israeli wars on Gaza, the work involves documentation, translation, and publication of women's testimonials.

Additionally, IWS had Public engagement on the current moment of increased genocidal violence - This involved public talks and written interventions for Arabic and English language audiences in different forum, including Arabic research centers and media platforms, regional and international activist and solidarity-informed spaces. One example was an event we held to discuss the violation of the Palestinian body in the Zionist colonial machine in which we asked about the violations of the Palestinian body practiced by the Zionist colonial machine against Palestinian men and women, on the ground and in captivity. The discussion involved how the colonial machine uses attacks on the Palestinian body, including those that carry the nature of sexual assault, with the aim of humiliation in an effort to suppress resistance. We also discussed how Palestinians, male and female, confront these attacks, while questioning the societal and political silence that often accompanies these forms of attacks.

The United Nations Security Council finally approved the resolution to stop the war. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, has presented the report "Anatomy of a Genocide". Do you think this massacre and genocide will be a turning point in the occupation of Palestine?

It is pathetic that "International organizations" including the International Court of Justice continue to contemplate and speculate if there is a legal base to assert that a genocide is being committed in Gaza and whether the formal legal definition of genocide is applied to Gaza, while the corpses of tens of thousands of starved and burned children, women and men and their smashed skulls and body parts under the rubble are aired on live stream for months.

Palestinians as all oppressed, enslaved and colonized people of the World had long grasped through their bodies, souls and minds the disillusionment with international organizations and "global governance" that stem from the existing global system which serves the interests of the colonial-imperial-capitalist elites in power. Colonized people deeply understand that an emancipated future necessitates the unity in struggle of the oppressed people, the exploited working class, the landless rural workers, indigenous peoples, as well as revolutionary students, revolutionary feminists and organic intellectuals immersed in the struggles of the oppressed and exploited masses.

The current genocidal war against Palestinians in all over Palestine and more specifically in Gaza is enabled by the current international system under imperial capitalism. Nevertheless, the recognition that such extreme forms of extermination lay at the core of the international system under imperial capitalism, should comprise the first condition of genuine unity of the oppressed. The second condition is the need to combine national and international struggle—each as the basis for the other. The unity in struggle entails engagement and radical solidarity with the local struggles against the oppressive local forces forming the historical-material conditions of the masses. It also entails uncovering the dialectical connections of the local and global oppressive forces and interests by understanding the ways in which local forces are intricately intertwined with global capitalist, imperialist racist power structures.

This unity should be designed to *counter* capitalist imperial globalization- the form of international exploitation- and to develop mass movement that is both national and international, local and global in its organization and alliances. The oppressed' struggles could not be actively promoted if confined by national walls when faced with an imperial capitalist system that expanded globally and that take its surplus from the capitalized blood of the colonized.

A realization that "no one is free unless everyone is free" is a must today. Yet, we need to restore the

meaning of radical freedom away from the imaginary liberal conception of freedom in the sense of freedom of choice and freedom of contract existing in a capitalist world in which the minority owns and monopolizes the world's wealth and in which as Ali Kadri says war had become the basis of accumulation.

In this context, we can capture Palestine's position in the global struggle against colonial, imperial and capitalist domination, oppression and exploitation and for liberation and social justice struggles. Ghassan Kanafani, a Palestinian novelist and revolutionary who was assassinated by Israel in 1972 once said that The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary, wherever he/or she is, as a cause for the exploited and oppressed masses in our era."

Kanafani's words lay the framework for the connection between the Palestinian liberation and social justice struggle, and other radical anti-imperial anti-capitalist and social justice struggles. Kanafani highlights the global significance of the Palestinian struggle, and positions the Palestinian cause at the heart of every struggle against exploitation and oppression. He emphasizes the intertwinement of the anti-Zionist and anti-imperial struggles.

The phrase "Gaza liberated us" heard recently by so many supporters who took the streets around the world is informing. It means that the blood of Gazans, the bombed bodies of Palestinian children, women and men, and the tortured bodies of Palestinian captives not only revealed to them the brutal face of Zionism as an eliminatory settler colonial machine that the indigenous people of Palestine encountered since late nineteenth century, but also exposed the oppressive nature of their own regimes and the imperial racist policies promoted by the elites as well as the hypocritic essence of the discourses of humanity and democracy they utter.

I would end by asserting that Palestine is a feminist cause, a cause about liberation and justice. The struggle for decolonizing Palestine is interconnected to the struggles of all oppressed peoples who endured and continue to endure colonization, imperialism, exploitation and dehumanization.

Palestinian women demand political radical solidarity from revolutionary feminists who believe in dismantling all forms of oppression everywhere. Feminists who struggle with us to liberate Palestine and engage with the global movement for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel as one manifestation of resistance to colonialism, imperialism and capitalism and envisioning an alternative future. Feminists who build a joint cross-movement and transnational feminist revolutionary solidarity with Palestinian feminists, and strategize, with an anti-colonial lens, around local and international activism in feminist movements.

With this, we conclude. The readers of the review will be able to read and learn about your work, as well as that of the Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University. Getting to know your history, the history of the Palestinian people, is undoubtedly a step forward in bringing visibility to the oppressed and achieving justice in other parts of the world.

Thank you for your time, Lena.

101

REFERENCES

- FANON, Frantz. (1965) *A Dying Colonialism*, New York: Groves Press.
- HAMMAMI, Rema. (1995) «Palestinian NGOs: professionalization of politics in the absence of an opposition», *Race and Class*, 37 (2), 51–63.
- HILTERMANN, Joost. (1988) *Before the uprising: the organization and mobilization of Palestinian workers and women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, PhD thesis, University of California at Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz.
- JAYAWARDENA, Kumari (2016) *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*. Verso.
- KUTTAB, Eileen (2009) «The Palestinian Women's Movement: From Resistance and Liberation to Accommodation and Globalization», In: *Vents d'Est*,

vents d'Ouest: Mouvements de femmes et féminismes anticoloniaux [online]. Genève: Graduate Institute Publications

MAKKAWI, Ibrahim. (2009) «Towards an Emerging Paradigm of Critical Community Psychology in Palestine», *The Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 75-86. <https://fada.birzeit.edu/bitstream/20.500.11889/5408/1/12.%20Makkawi%20--%20Emerging%20Paradigm.pdf>

PCBS (2024) *Israeli Occupation Aggression on Palestine since Oct.7th 2023*, accessed at: https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang__en/1/default.aspx (30 November 2024).

PEACE NOW (2023) *30 Years After Oslo – The data that shows how the settlements proliferated following the Oslo Accords*, accessed at: <https://peacenow.org.il/en/30-years-after-oslo-the-data-that-shows-how-the-settlements-proliferated-following-the-oslo-accords> (30 June 2024).

TARAKI, Lisa. (1989) «Mass organizations in the West Bank», in ARURI, N.H. (ed.), *Occupation: Israel Over Palestine*, Belmont, Massachusetts: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc.