THE "WOMEN'S FRONT" Nationalism, Feminism, and Modernity in Palestine

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Nationalisms are polymorphous and often internally contradictory, unleashing emancipatory as well as repressive ideas and forces. This article explores the ideologies and mobilization strategies of two organizations over a 10-year period in the occupied Palestinian territories: a leftist-nationalist party in which women became unusually powerful and its affiliated and remarkably successful nationalist-feminist women's organization. Two factors allowed women to become powerful and facilitated a fruitful coexistence between nationalism and feminism: (1) a commitment to a variant of modernist ideology that was marked by grassroots as opposed to military mobilization and (2) a concern with proving the cultural worth of Palestinian society to the West, a project that was symbolized by women's status in important ways. By comparing international and indigenous feminist discourses, the study also demonstrates how narratives about gender status in the Third World are implicated in, and inextricable from, international economic and political inequalities.

Feminist scholarship has critically explored nationalism, revealing its gendered and often misogynist assumptions, discourses, and practices (Enloe 1990; Hale 1993; Ivekovic 1993; Lake 1992; McClintock 1995; Papic 1992; Randall 1992; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). The requirement of cohesion based on race-ethnicity or nationality is the crux of the tension between nationalism and feminism.

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In addition, men often construct nationalist narratives on the basis of gender differences, with national agency and citizenship assumed to be masculine prerogatives defined in contrast to femininity (Enloe 1990, 44; McClintock 1995, 353). In highlighting these issues, however, much feminist literature has erased women as actors by treating nationalist identity as a male phenomenon and nationalism as a masculinist project that is uniformly oppressive of women. Often coupled with this perspective is the idea, in some academic feminist circles, that evidence of strong nationalist sentiment among women negates an "authentic" feminist identity that is, by definition, based solely on gender. This occurs despite the now frequent intellectual acknowledgment that women's gender identities and locations always coexist with other subjectivities and material inequalities based on nation, race-ethnicity, and/or class.

This article explores the ideologies and mobilization strategies of the leftist-nationalist Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and its affiliated nationalist-feminist women's organization, the Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees (PFWAC), in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, demonstrating that nationalism and feminism were largely successful as a combined project in the 10 years predating the uprising that began in late 1987.[1] During this period, the PFWAC was the largest and most influential women's organization in the territories, and women were distinctly powerful in the DFLP as well. Women's influence was facilitated by a commitment to grassroots as opposed to military mobilization, a strategy that was particularly attractive to women given gendered constraints on political activity. Women also took advantage of this opening in the opportunity structure to mobilize other women with a nationalist-feminist agenda that developed in a dialectic relationship with local conditions. Women's influence was further enabled by the belief that women in leadership positions symbolized modernity, which DFLP and PFWAC men and women understood to be important in advancing the national question in the international arena.

Viewing women as nationalist actors avoids the dichotomy of women as either "dupes" of men, when they act on nationalist identities, or "authentic" feminists, when they deny their subaltern status along other axes. Consistent with most nationalist narratives, Palestinian male nationalist narratives have frequently valorized women as biological reproducers of the nation, analogized the land of Palestine to women's bodies, and represented the appropriation and occupation of Palestine as the sexual violation and appropriation of women's bodies (Abdo 1994; Abdulhadi 1994). Despite this, national identities are as salient for women as they are for men. Moreover, Palestinian women frequently narrate their own often subversive stories about national and gender identities (Layoun 1992). In sum, a more accurate assessment of women's nationalist involvement should situate them simultaneously as actors, symbols, and authors—using, being used by, and constructing nationalism on their own terms.

METHOD

For six months in 1989, while a master's student, I was an intern with the PFWAC in the occupied Palestinian territories.[2] I traveled to the territories to witness the uprising (or *intifada*) that had begun in December 1987, and worked with the federation because it had a reputation as the most effective women's organization in the territories. Between September and December 1995, I returned to the territories as a doctoral student and conducted research on the DFLP and PFWAC. This article is based on analysis of in-depth interviews conducted in late 1995 with 29 former high-ranking and midlevel men and women cadres of the DFLP and/or PFWAC (2 women never joined the DFLP), participant observation in 1989, organizational magazines and documents, and secondary sources.

The women interviewed came from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Of the total, 9 of the 18 women were working class, while the remainder were lower-middle to middle class; 12 of the women were urbanites, and the remainder were villagers or refugee camp residents; 15 of the 18 women were from the West Bank (largely the Jerusalem and Ramallah areas), and 3 were originally from the Gaza Strip. When they joined the PFWAC and/or DFLP in the 1970s or early 1980s, the West Bankers were usually single and either students or employed as teachers, other professionals, secretaries, or factory workers; the Gazans were married and unemployed. Overall, the women had relatively high levels of education; half had earned bachelor's degrees and the remainder had completed at least 12 years of schooling. Half, or 9 of the 18 women, had served time as political prisoners—7 were prisoners between 6 months and 4 years and 2 served over 10 years (one of whom was expelled from the territories for an additional 10 years). Two women were allowed to visit their deported husbands abroad in the late 1980s on condition that they not return for three years. Other restrictions included travel bans and town arrests.[3]

The 11 men interviewed came from middle- to lower-middle-class backgrounds. Eight of the 11 served long prison terms in the 1970s, 1980s, and/or 1990s (4 were also deported for long periods), and 2 others were DFLP leaders abroad until they returned in the 1990s. Those in the territories in the 1970s and 1980s were journalists, laborers, and/or union organizers when not imprisoned. There were 3 from Gaza and 8 from the West Bank, primarily from the Jerusalem and Ramallah areas. Although well read (especially given long prison terms), proportionally fewer men were college educated in comparison to the women.[4]

THE DFLP: IDEOLOGY AND STRATEGY

The DFLP was created in February 1969 by cadres who split from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and was one of the four primary

constituent parties in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The DFLP considered itself a vanguard party in the Leninist sense and was particularly vested in grassroots mobilization, especially of the Palestinian working class—a project it considered necessary for national liberation. It was also a "socializing movement" (Hart 1996, 97-98, 138-39) in the sense that its leaders and cadres believed that national liberation required the "modernization" of Palestinian society and social values. All Palestinian leftist-nationalist parties shared a modernist frame that included the conviction that "traditional" (even "backward") corporate family, village, and religious ascriptive identities and structures had to be superseded by a unitary nationalist identity that would allow for mobilization and eventually lead to a socialist rational bureaucratic state. However, in comparison to the PFLP, the largest leftist party in the territories, the DFLP was unusually committed to nonmilitary grassroots mobilization.[5]

As was the case with most Palestinian nationalist parties in the post-1967 period, membership in the DFLP was illegal in Israel and the occupied territories, and thus its central offices were located outside of Palestine. Moreover, until 1975, the DFLP focused its mobilization activities outside of the territories, primarily in Jordan and Lebanon, where there are significant Palestinian refugee populations. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the DFLP became particularly concerned with mobilizing wider segments of the population in the territories, largely as a result of the civil war in Jordan in 1969 to 1970 and the political instability in Lebanon that began in 1975. With the exception of the Voluntary Work Committees (VWCs), which were dominated by students and focused on agricultural and urban voluntary activities (Sahliyeh 1988; Taraki 1990), political activity in the territories had been limited to elite urban-based organizing or (less frequently) isolated violent actions. Elite activity, although sometimes including leftists and sporadically mobilizing the population, by definition limited nationalist involvement to urban notables, businessmen, and intellectuals. Violent political actions, whether undertaken individually or in groups, were difficult to win and costly, as indicated by the Gaza experience in the early years of the Israeli occupation. In addition, because of its danger, violence usually engaged only the young people most intensely committed to the national struggle *and* willing to risk their lives (and for women, reputations).

As mass-based organizing in the territories intensified in the late 1970s, it expanded the possibilities for political action and ushered in a new mode of organizing based on sectors, such as students, workers, and women. Membership in these sector-based organizations was highly decentralized in chapters or "basic units" established throughout the territories. These new organizations, although sponsored by political parties, did not require their members to affiliate or be ideologically committed to sponsoring political parties, reducing the risk of arrest and other punishment for rank-and-file members. This flexibility and reduced risk encouraged the involvement of thousands of people who wanted to take part in nationalist activity without joining a party or participating in military activity. The DFLP, which was the third largest party in the territories by the mid-1980s—after the centrist, nationalist Fateh and the leftist PFLP—was particularly committed to

these new mobilization forms, initiating the first women's and worker[6] mass-based organizations in 1978.

THE PFWAC: BACKGROUND AND PROGRAM

In March 1978, DFLP women created the PFWAC against the wishes of many DFLP men who wanted DFLP women to concentrate their energies on working within existing organizations, such as the charitable women's associations or the VWCs, in order to recruit women directly into the DFLP rather than creating a "separatist" women's organization (F. al-Labadi 1993, 50). DFLP women argued that an independent women's organization was necessary because the charitable associations were more conservative with respect to women's nationalist involvement and the gender order and were not amenable to DFLP women's involvement (Siham Barghouti, personal communication, October 31, 1995). In addition, only a small minority of girls and women (largely urbanite students) participated in the VWCs' mixed-gender activities because of the gendered restrictions imposed on most girls and women.[7]

In attempting to recruit these unmobilized women into the PFWAC, however, DFLP women realized that they could not ignore their gender problems, thus transforming a women's nationalist organization into a grassroots nationalist-feminist organization, whose program "concentrated on solving women's problems before involving them in the national struggle. . . . Our work with the mass of women proved to be a crucial step in the emergence of a consciousness that was both feminist and political-national" (F. al-Labadi 1993, 52-53).

Although initiated by DFLP women activists, the PFWAC included PFLP and independent academic women in its first few years. The PFWAC became unusually successful even in comparison to the other DFLP mass-based organizations, according to Rana Zaqout, a former DFLP woman cadre who worked primarily as a student and youth organizer.

> I believe that [high-ranking DFLP/PFWAC women] had roles in creating plans for the other [DFLP mass-based] organizations. But let me tell you, the other organizations of the DFLP did not take the stamp of the PFWAC. I can't—it's difficult to define the reason—the PFWAC was among the most successful mass-based organizations here. It was not like this on the level of the student organization, it was not like this on the level of the worker organization. (interview, November 14, 1995)

The success of the organization increased factional competition to control it. Within three years, its Executive Committee was primarily composed of DFLP women, since women affiliated with other political parties created separate women's organizations.[8] Unlike most "women's auxiliaries" of nationalist, revolutionary, or labor movements, the PFWAC remained relatively independent of the DFLP—charting a course that successfully combined a nationalist and feminist agenda for a 10-year period. This independence was facilitated by the fact that

women remained powerful in all formal and mass-based DFLP structures in the territories. Despite this strong presence of women in the party and its mass-based organizations, the attention to women's emancipation continued to make the PFWAC different.

> As a women's movement, [we] used to realize that . . . we live the bitterness of women's lives and see how much Palestinian women are suffering. And we . . . want[ed] to organize women [in nationalist work] *and* we want[ed] to change the social realities that they live in. (Fadwa al-Labadi, interview, October 26, 1995)

Practicality, flexibility, and a focus on women's daily needs were important components of the PFWAC program and key to its success (PFWAC 1988, 6). This required listening to women and having them take responsibility for making change. PFWAC committees were therefore usually initiated during informal meetings in which women discussed their needs.

> The women must take the responsibility of organizing themselves. We will not do it for them. They must find the one woman among them who can already read, or sew well enough, or who knows how to use a knitting machine, and persuade her to teach them. Then we will provide the books, or the sewing machines or knitting machines, the cloth, the yarn. In turn, they must spread out and teach other women. (Zahira Kamal, quoted in Morgan 1989, 277)

In addition to sewing and knitting courses, in the early 1980s the PFWAC began to raise money to buy sewing machines for individual women, provided raw materials for traditional embroidery and basket and rug weaving, and created a biannual bazaar in Jerusalem where women directly sold their products to customers. In the mid-1980s, the PFWAC organized cooperatives where women could buy, sell, or trade clothing and processed food. They also rented buildings for sewing, framing, rug-weaving, and food-processing projects.[9] The organization also established preschools and larger income generating projects, and organized lectures in villages and refugee camps addressing health and family planning issues.[10]

Key to the PFWAC's feminist agenda was empowering women by encouraging self-reliance, independence, and leadership skills. Literacy projects, income-generating projects, preschools, and training courses were designed to foster this independence and empowerment by rupturing women's isolation in their homes. This occurred even as the PFWAC taught women skills and provided services that arguably also reinforced the gendered division of labor. The gendered nature of many of these skills and services were largely related to the PFWAC's commitment to provide programs congruent with local requests and locally available skills and material (Zahira Kamal, personal communication, October 29, 1995).

Organizers were flexible in their application of the PFWAC program. The antireligious connotations of Marxism and the security and reputational risks associated with nationalist activity obliged organizers to de-emphasize those aspects of PFWAC affiliation during early mobilization attempts despite opposition

from male and some female DFLP leaders (F. al-Labadi 1993, 56). As one organizer explained,

> We used to learn from the people and we would move from the point of the people. . . . When we started a committee in Hebron, we would do it in the committee offices. In another town [Doura], where they used to call us communists . . . the PFWAC established a committee in a mosque. I took with me a *shaykh* [Muslim preacher]. I prayed—I do not pray, of course—and after prayers and prayers, I stayed until 6:00 because it was the birthday of the prophet, the shaykh presented me and I was on the pulpit speaking about the PFWAC. I was discussing its program in a way that people could understand what I was saying. . . . I did not mobilize them with ideology like other members of the PFWAC were mobilized, the leadership was mobilized. . . . No. I used to say to them: "Who of you embroiders? Who of you knits?" I went down exactly to where people were. (Lutfiyeh Sharif, interview, October 25, 1995)

The PFWAC program also required women at local levels to organize "lectures, panels and rallies which acquaint[ed] women with their positions and problems, with our people's problems, and with Arab and international women's struggles" (PFWAC 1988, 4). Some of the biggest problems PFWAC cadres faced were

> women's perceptions of the natural physical differences between the sexes which explain and legitimise women's inferior social positions. Usually they refused to get involved in actions which conflicted with their beliefs. . . . In other words, most of the women in our society thought that the natural role of women was limited to domestic work and child-care. This belief . . . led us to work hard to educate and induce women to change these stereotypical ideas. (F. al-Labadi 1993, 56)

Women were encouraged to discuss their problems as women during PFWAC meetings, which were then used to reframe women's problems as social-structural, as opposed to personal, and to find solutions.

> We would see that the problems that existed for women were based on the fact that she did not know her situation. . . . So in the beginning, we would put her problems before her. And from those problems we presented to her, we would tell her the ways she could solve these problems by giving her various alternatives she could undertake. For example, the biggest problem women used to suffer from was illiteracy. . . . And her education was low because her world was only her children and the house and she did not even deal with those issues with the right methods. . . . If one has not studied, he stays distant from the world and has no points of communication with the world. So we opened literacy training courses. (Amneh Hasan Theeb, interview, November 29, 1995)[11]

The PFWAC's feminist agenda was explicit in its Arabic-language publications. PFWAC women believed that the proletarization of men had made women "the prisoners of housework" (PUWWC 1987a, 1; Palestine Women's Work Committees [PWWC] 1985, 14). They assumed that proletarization would, in turn, emancipate working-class women, increasing their options and challenging the idea that

"the woman was born only to be a housewife" (PWWC 1984, 3). Employed women were believed to have the most revolutionary potential because the economic necessity that had driven Palestinian women to work outside the home "pushed them into many social conflicts," compelling them to realize that

> the subordination of women does not stem from a lack in terms of her [biological/psychological/intellectual] makeup but . . . is a result of male monopolization of productive work. [That] is the issue that domesticated her and made her completely docile to her father, or her brother, or her husband. (Kamal, quoted in PWWC 1984, 3)

Women's work was significant to the PFWAC in another way. Driven by the idea that women had to believe that they were as valuable as men before they would fight for equal treatment, the organization expended much energy redefining Palestinian women's paid and unpaid daily work so that the women themselves realized its social significance.

> Women's economic contribution in her home is not something new. Women have always worked in this area, whether by helping her husband in the fields, or raising of chickens and livestock, or through her own provision of the things that her home needs, such as drying and preserving vegetables or through the making of cheeses and yoghurts and bread and other such things . . . except that this work is not paid a wage. (PWWC 1984, 16)

Part of this project included reframing "housewifery" and increasing the self-confidence of married women who were not formally employed, thereby encouraging this group of women to participate in a politicized female collectivity.

> The woman is brains and aptitudes, and she is a mother and housewife and a worker in all the areas of life. She is essentially the mother of the people, responsible as an individual for creating a good family that can face the requirements of daily life. . . . The conviction of the housewife in herself, her abilities, and her aptitudes creates in her a social person who likes to work with other women to better the situation of the other women of her sex. (Rifqa Wadi, quoted in PWWC 1983, 27)

The opportunity for women to engage in gender-segregated political work was also extremely important to the success of the PFWAC, as was the organization's recognition that mobilizing women required winning over their communities and families. (Many women, however, concealed their involvement in mixed-gender party work by affiliating with the PFWAC, a situation encouraged by the organization). In'am 'Obeidi, a former coordinator of the PFWAC preschool programs, argued that the PFWAC developed a special reputation in this respect. When young women's families resisted their involvement with the PFWAC, "*Umm Iflan* [the mother of so and so]" would assure the relatives.

> "These women, my dear, are with the committees, the women's committees." And when they saw that young women were coming to their homes, this helped in terms

> of moving the situation of women in the villages more than if a young man came to see them. And if you say, "I was in the Women's Committee [*lajnet al-niswan*] and was out late until 5:00 or 6:00 p.m.," it's easier, do you understand. ('Obeidi, interview, November 30, 1995)

In many ways, then, the key to the PFWAC's success was that its grassroots activities worked within the limits set by a patriarchal gender order so that families, especially men, would not be threatened by women's political and other activities outside of their homes: "Ultimately we wanted to revolutionise women's position in our society, but we could not bring about a revolution all at once" (F. al-Labadi 1993, 53).

TENSIONS OF NATIONALISM AND FEMINISM

There is often both compatibility and tension between nationalist and feminist socialization and mobilization. On one hand, the projects of nationalism and feminism in the Palestinian context have been compatible given the ease with which women could apply the emancipatory discourses, goals, and expectations of national liberation movements to their own subordination as women. On the other hand, combining the two projects was often difficult and fraught with contradictions, especially since national liberation was considered a legitimate project and a widely held goal by men and women, but gender inequality was more likely to be viewed as a "natural" hierarchy whose challenge threatened core social values and potentially the very national "community" itself.

Consistent with the traditional Marxian assumption of gender inequality as an epiphenomenon of class inequality (Engels 1951, 11; Tucker 1978, 479-80), Palestinian leftist-nationalist ideologies temporally posited national liberation as the primary concern, class liberation as second, and gender liberation as third and highly dependent on securing the first two (al-Khalili 1981; 'Ali Abu Hilal, personal communication, November 1, 1995). In contrast to these leftist-nationalist discourses and to feminist discourses that treat nationalism as a "false consciousness" for women, PFWAC women viewed women's *active participation* in the national liberation struggle as a prerequisite for women's liberation.

> Palestinian women will gain their liberation in part because of their ability to take a strong position in the progressive ranks of our national movement. To the same extent that the organized and the unified women's movement progresses in its confrontation with the policies of the occupation, and to the extent to which it can fulfill its role as a crucial part of the nationalist movement, Palestinian women in the occupied territories can establish and develop an imposing presence in their society. (PFWAC 1988, 2-3; see also PWWC 1985, 4)

They also believed that "national action contributes to personal liberation for women . . . [by] helping to break down the isolation and ignorance that . . . had

ensured women's acquiescence in patriarchal oppression, and to break down all obstacles facing women's emancipation" (F. al-Labadi 1993, 9).

PFWAC women did not necessarily believe, however, that nationalism was a panacea for women. A feminist movement was necessary in the post-1967 period, a PFWAC document argued, because the "awareness of the role of women in the national struggle did not reflect a . . . parallel awareness of the necessity of liberating women from the captivity of the social concepts and traditions which hindered her active participation in different aspects of life" (PUWWC 1987a, 2). While DFLP men almost always argued for the primacy of the nationalist struggle among the trinity of oppressions (national, class, and gender), DFLP/PFWAC women were more likely to argue for maintaining a balance. When a PFWAC cadre writing in the annual magazine, for example, qualified her critique of the exploitation of working women by Palestinian capitalists by arguing that the struggle against the Israeli occupation should be primary (PUWWC 1986a, 41), the PFWAC Executive Committee published the following response:

> We in the PFWAC agree with the writer of this article that the primary contradiction for all sectors of our people, among them the Palestinian woman, is the occupation in this stage of national liberation. But this does not deny [the fact] that the Palestinian woman in the Occupied Territories should plunge into/engage in struggle in order to advance her social situation so that she is able to play her primary role in the national struggle and social progress. (PUWWC 1986a, 41)

There were other tensions related to gender. Although the DFLP was committed to the idea of mass-based organizations that were ideologically more loosely structured than the party, this commitment occasionally conflicted with the party's recruitment goals. One of the early points of contention between the DFLP outside the territories and the PFWAC concerned the pace at which PFWAC women recruits were introduced to the DFLP and its Marxist-Leninist ideology.

> [W]e found that we needed a stage to convince women to even be members in the committee [PFWAC]. After they were members and worked in the PFWAC . . . then they would be offered to be members of the party and then immediately you would tell them that this is a Marxist-Leninist party. Now when they hear that it is a Marxist-Leninist party or the PFWAC has connections to nationalist work . . . she would escape the following day. . . . We used to tell them [the DFLP outside]: "This way is difficult. You are not living the realities. It's true that all the people here have nationalist feelings, but it's not easy to immediately push women into nationalist work. So give us a little time." (F. al-Labadi, interview, October 26, 1995)

Despite these differences, at least until 1988, when the nature of the relationship between the party and its grassroots organizations changed considerably, most former DFLP women organizers I interviewed believed that party recruitment from the mass-based organizations, as long as women had the option of remaining solely PFWAC members if they chose, was natural (*tabi'i*), since the organizers embraced the ideology and program of the DFLP. Such recruitment was also seen as positive

because a move from gender-segregated to gender-mixed political work indicated that a PFWAC recruit had reached a turning point in her willingness to make that transition and to confront the potential social consequences of doing so. Thus, disagreements over *tahzeeb* (making people party members) were primarily related to the time frame within which it occurred or the type of *ta'biyeh* (mobilization) that was required.

The distribution of DFLP money in the territories was another gender-based source of tension between the DFLP and its mass-based organizations, and between the PFWAC and the worker mass-based organization. Many male leaders of the DFLP-affiliated Worker's Unity Bloc (WUB) resented the allocation of significant money from the DFLP to the PFWAC; some envied the PFWAC's success and others believed that mobilizing workers was more important than mobilizing women, especially those not working for wages in the "productive" sphere. One former male WUB leader who I interviewed referred to the PFWAC's involvement in day care centers and preschools, one of the organization's major expenses, as "bourgeois." High-ranking DFLP/PFWAC women said that for these reasons, the worker organization and the PFWAC received approximately equal amounts of money from the party even though the PFWAC mobilized larger numbers and its work was more expensive. In response, PFWAC women became very adept at raising funds from governments, foreign nongovernmental organizations, and multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the European Economic Community.

Despite these tensions, there is little evidence that the DFLP outside the territories used its control of the purse strings during this period to manipulate the PFWAC (the situation differed in the post-1988 period). The relationship between the DFLP and the WUB, in contrast, was less independent according to former WUB and PFWAC men *and* women activists. The PFWAC's relative independence appears to have been related to a number of factors. First, although the "movers and shakers" in the PFWAC were DFLP women and the federation was clearly associated with the party by the early 1980s, the PFWAC had developed a nationalist-feminist identity that was distinct from the DFLP. Second, enough high-ranking women in the PFWAC/DFLP and in other DFLP organizations believed that the PFWAC should be somewhat independent of the party that such independence was made a reality. Third, the PFWAC's independent relationships with international funders provided the organization with a measure of autonomy from the party. Finally, fewer imprisonments and deportations meant that PFWAC women had more longevity in leadership positions and thus more authority in the party than men in the WUB.

THE "WOMEN'S FRONT"

The DFLP as a whole was exceptional among political groups in the proportion of women involved from the rank and file to the leadership levels in all sectors in

the territories. It developed a reputation as a "women's front" (*jabhat al-niswan*), an appellation I learned of in 1995 and was used pejoratively (in the same vein as *sissy*) by some cadres in competing parties. The party encouraged women to become active and to be party leaders, particularly in the territories. Although Palestinian women and young people were actively involved in all the other political parties in the territories, women were much more likely to lead DFLP structures.[12] In addition to leading the PFWAC and the DFLP, women often led DFLP union and student structures, especially when no man was qualified to undertake such a task. When men were imprisoned or deported, women would constitute 70 to 80 percent of DFLP leaders at all party levels in the territories. The more effective a female DFLP cadre was, the more likely she was to lead or be in charge of party structures (all of which were gender mixed), a sometimes contentious situation for men (F. al-Labadi 1993, 40-41; R. Zaqout, personal communication, November 14, 1995). The DFLP was also "feminized" at the grassroots level in the territories, largely as a result of mobilization by the PFWAC (Barghouti, personal communication, October 31, 1995). Thus, despite the fact that mass-based organization members were not required to join political parties, by the mid-1980s, many considered themselves members of the sponsoring party, formally became members, or were counted as members by party leaders.

Indeed, the impact of the PFWAC on the DFLP was such that women at all levels of the PFWAC often criticized my distinction between the organizations, saying that by the early 1980s, "The PFWAC *was* the DFLP." Distinguishing between the DFLP and the PFWAC was even more difficult in Gaza, according to former leader Tahani Abu Daqqa: "Truly . . . in the Gaza Strip, the women are the ones who began the DFLP. . . . [M]ost of the women entered [the party] because of the PFWAC" (Tahani Abu Daqqa, personal communication, October 17, 1995). Nawal Zaqout, also from Gaza, stressed the inseparable identities of the PFWAC and DFLP in Gaza: "The Federation was the only women's organization that had a strong presence in Gaza. They used to consider us at the level of the PFWAC and at the level of the DFLP. . . . Or the Democratic Front was established in Gaza by a group of women" (personal communication, December 2, 1995).

In sum, the PFWAC was not a subordinate organization; it shaped the DFLP, bringing in women at the grassroots level to a party that already had a strong presence of women in leadership positions. The PFWAC's successful organization of women using a nationalist-feminist agenda, in turn, reinforced the influence of women in the DFLP.

MOBILIZATION, MODERNITY, AND WOMEN

Why did the DFLP in the occupied territories—alone among Palestinian nationalist parties and unusual even compared to other 20th-century nationalist, class-based, and revolutionary movements—include such a large proportion of women at both the leadership and rank-and-file levels? Several accounts were offered. First,

former women leaders emphasized the party's active recruitment of women and encouragement of their leadership. Women's presence from the mid-1970s through the 1980s was also reinforced by the success and effectiveness of women activists at all party levels, which in turn increased the respect of DFLP men and, combined with the inclusion of women at leadership levels, made it a party other women wanted to join. Former DFLP and/or PFWAC women cadres stressed a DFLP commitment to having women in leadership positions and the important role of the early corps of DFLP women, who actively recruited other women. From the 1970s, DFLP women cadres in the territories wanted to establish that

> the reality of the occupation affects both sexes and in the end both sexes have to fight together to confront it. We succeeded with the participation of girls. [We did this because] we were ideologized into a view that says that the advancement of society was tied to the advancement of women. (Barghouti, interview, October 31, 1995)

Likewise, 'Aysha 'Oda, a former DFLP leader who was imprisoned from 1969 until 1979 and then deported to Jordan until 1991, explained the importance of successful women leaders attracting other women to the organization.

> Maybe [women's influence in the DFLP] was connected with the first group of women cadres. Because always, when you have a cadre of women who are advanced and progressive, it can attract other advanced and progressive women. For example, Zahira [Kamal] . . . was able to attract some of the most important women cadres to the Democratic Front. (interview, December 2, 1995)

Women and men also pointed to women's relative advantage over men in terms of political risk. DFLP women were inadvertently aided by an Israeli occupying regime that viewed women's political activity as less threatening than male activity. As a result, men in the territories were more likely than women to be removed from the political scene (through deportation, imprisonment, or being in hiding), giving Palestinian women more political latitude and organizational staying power than men.

> We used to see that it was through these women's abilities that they reached these leadership positions and that they were truly good and able to lead. Maybe, in terms of security, it was even better. . . . Each time they [men] built a good organization, it was destroyed when they were arrested. The political pressure against women was less, so women were able to perform within the DFLP and were able to continue and build cumulatively. (Theeb, interview, November 29, 1995)

Although men and women spoke about DFLP women's leadership abilities and their relative advantage in terms of security-related arrests and deportations, men were more likely to stress the security implications and women were more likely to stress women's leadership abilities. Some men seemed somewhat defensive or at least uncomfortable with the reputation of the DFLP as an organization in which women were powerful.

> To say that the DFLP was a women's party might be justified. Even though, me personally, in my ideas, I am proud of the fact that there was a wide majority of women involved in the DFLP, and this was positive and a reality in our heritage, but I do not think this was the issue here. Perhaps, like I said, as a result of the DFLP having many hits from the occupation, many times, these hits did not reach women. Women's bodies in the DFLP would remain mobile in all situations. To a large extent, this helped protect the structure of the DFLP as a whole. And it also helped the female comrades [*rafeeqat*] to take the reins of power in positions of leadership that were central and effective in political decision making within the party. (Jamal Zaqout, interview, November 14, 1995)

I argue that at least two other factors facilitated the strong presence of women in the party. First, it was to some extent an unintended consequence of the DFLP's commitment to mass-based mobilization as opposed to military activity. Indeed, the nonmilitary grassroots mobilization strategy undertaken by the DFLP is a feminized variant of political action because it is dependent on building an infrastructure of supportive and active members through socialization and engagement with everyday lives, typically women's domains. Popular support for military action in a national liberation context, on the other hand, depends more on whether a particular action is successful and does not require socialization or the building of a grassroots infrastructure. Furthermore, militarist projects by definition exclude most women because the social risk associated with such activity is usually higher for them than it is for men, since an attack on women's bodies is often seen as a violation of both honor codes and national integrity. This to some extent explains why male participants of military activity usually exclude or limit women's participation.

Second, women's presence was facilitated by the party's assumption that Palestinian self-determination to some extent required *proof* of civilizational worth or modernity to the international community in a context where women's political inclusion and leadership were seen to symbolize both. Former DFLP leader Mohamed al-Labadi noted that "putting women in a leadership position would open for it [the DFLP] a marginal space in international work that is wider than having male leaders" (personal communication, November 7, 1995). This is consistent with Rosemary Ridd's argument that during international conflict, a society may symbolically use the participation of women "to represent to the outside world its determination [in an] all-out struggle in which 'even' women, and children, play their part," juxtaposing to maximum effect the "seemingly conflicting notions of the protected female and the militant woman" (1986, 5). This issue was understood by Palestinians of all political stripes and used to full effect by both men and women. Although recently decolonized states in the United Nations were generally sympathetic to Palestinians and the PLO, as was the USSR, Western countries largely took the opposite track, with some financially and militarily supporting Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories (as well as southern Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights) and others ignoring these conflicts altogether unless they appeared to threaten the international economic or political order. In this environment, Pales-

tinian women's political resistance came to represent how badly Palestinians were treated by Israel and many Western countries and how deserving they were of self-determination.

More than this, however, women's active presence and leadership in the nationalist project appeared to symbolize the modernity and civilized nature of Palestinian society to the international community. Women's appearance, bodies, sexuality, and/or social status have been used as powerful political symbols of modernity and tradition in other societies in the 20th century (Ahmed 1992; Chatterjee 1993; Hart 1996; Jayawardena 1986; Kandiyoti 1987, 1989; Katrak 1992; Mani 1992; Najmabadi 1991, 1993). The high visibility and influence of DFLP women was to some extent both a consequence and a reflection of the party's modernist outlook. It was a consequence in that the social and political projects of modernity were as- sumed to require the restructuring of social relations, including gender, along nontraditional lines, encouraging women's political participation and leadership. At the same time, women's full incorporation into the nationalist project symbolized and reflected the civilized and modern nature of Palestinian society to the world, which some believed strengthened the case for Palestinian self-determination.

The relationship between women's involvement in the nationalist project and international responses to the Palestinian quest for self-determination arose repeatedly during interviews. When I asked Barghouti, for example, if there were any positive aspects of the intifada, she discussed the high level of women's participation, which

> gave a picture to the world that the role of the Palestinian woman in the intifada made her civilized. [It] made people think that there must truly be something wrong and that the international community must get involved and attempt to solve this problem. So in the end, women's roles in the intifada directly affected what happened with the Palestinian cause. Because of this, we saw a lot of concern from all the media, from all the international and national institutions, women's and non-women's organizations, human rights [organizations]. [They saw] how much suffering women go through, how strong women are in dealing with these problems, how courageous. And if an army of these women participate in the intifada, then the situation the people live must truly be painful. (interview, October 31, 1995)

Similarly, when I asked her why the DFLP mobilized women, she replied: "The goals of the DFLP were clear. A part of it was progressive, that women must participate. The increased participation of women would lead to the view that it is a progressive party. It would raise trust in the international community that this is so" (personal communication, October 31, 1995). When Ni'meh al-Hilu, a longtime DFLP and PFWAC leader from the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza, was asked why she thought women became as powerful as they did in the DFLP, she also raised the relationship between "progress" and women's leadership, although the focus of her narrative was a concern with "catching up" with the rest of the world.

> We were a large number of women during that period in the party but this does not mean that there were no men. There were men, but the belief in this party was why shouldn't women take top leadership positions? Why does she not lead a party or organization? . . . We used to look out into the world and see that there were women prime ministers; there were queens, there were women social affairs ministers. And the party compared women in the world and Palestinian women in terms of progress. (interview, December 2, 1995)

Tahani Abu Daqqa, a former PFWAC and DFLP leader from the southern Gaza Strip, also pointed to this phenomenon, but was more critical of the symbolic deployment of women by the DFLP and the nationalist movement generally.

> After the [1990] split [of the DFLP] occurred . . . I was surprised that they [party men] did not really think about women the way they said they did: "We trust in women and her roles; we trust that women should be in positions of power." No, having women—and this is in all the parties, not just the DFLP—women are like prestige [she used the English word] for the party. She appears before the world, saying we [Palestinians] are okay in terms of women and their roles. (Abu Daqqa, interview, October 17, 1995)

Significantly, this deployment of Palestinian women was not strictly a male enterprise, as DFLP women, particularly those in the PFWAC, also recognized and used the symbolic significance of their activities in the international arena. Western intransigence with respect to the Palestinian quest for self-determination was, indeed, to some extent rationalized by a sometimes explicit, but usually unstated, assumption that inclusion into the international community required a type of cultural capital—modernity and civilizational worthiness—that Palestinians did not possess. As explored below, this, in turn, circumscribed Palestinian feminist narratives in the international arena.

INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST NARRATIVES

DFLP and PFWAC leaders were convinced that dialogue with the outside world, especially by Palestinian women, was an important means of demonstrating the legitimacy of Palestinian self-determination. In this section, I address how this commitment manifested itself in the PFWAC, and second, the implications of such a commitment in the context of international feminist discourses. I explore the latter issue by examining some of the issues of contention that arose at the 1975 International Women's Year meetings in Mexico City, the 1980 mid-U.N. Decade for Women meetings in Copenhagen, and the 1985 international women's meetings in Nairobi.

The PFWAC was concerned from early in its history with establishing an international presence and networking with feminist and solidarity organizations. It was the only women's organization, and one of the few Palestinian organizations (with the exception of Birzeit University), to appoint public relations officers from

the early 1980s in the territories. Even before the intifada, the PFWAC public relations office had established an extensive network of relations with international women's organizations,[13] church groups, and other nongovernmental organizations (Najjar 1992, 147); responded to letters from interested researchers and activists; maintained an international mailing list; and regularly mailed out cards commemorating important dates in 20th-century Palestinian history. The organization also produced an English-language newsletter targeted to its international friends and funders and was unusually open to international volunteers, as indicated by my own voluntary work with the PFWAC in 1989 and the presence of other non-Palestinian women working in the organization. The PFWAC was also unique in establishing early contacts with the Israeli women's groups that took positions against the occupation.[14]

PFWAC women were also involved in international feminist gatherings.[15] The PFWAC agenda at these meetings, however, was often different than its grassroots agenda in the territories. Although the PFWAC was generally recognized to be a feminist organization by non-Palestinian individuals and groups with ties to the region, at the international level, the organization consistently downplayed gender inequality in Palestinian society, even when the audience was a feminist one. This tendency to avoid airing the dirty gender laundry was particularly strong when Western women were part of the gatherings. This phenomenon was also evident in PFWAC English-language documents and in discussions with delegations from Europe and North America (some of which I listened to), which had a less radical and more vague gender critique than Arabic-language material distributed to women in the territories. The focus in external contexts and conversations was usually on the oppressive nature of the Israeli occupation for Palestinian women. The following excerpt from the PFWAC statement presented before the July 1985 international women conference in Nairobi illustrates this narrative:

> We talk of peace while Palestinian women . . . are being confronted with physical destruction, displacement, starvation and thirst. . . . What peace, development and equality is there for Palestinians when Israel still occupies their lands and the Palestinian people is prevented from exercising its legitimate rights? Are these practices not a violation of the laws of the United Nations and the right of peoples to national self-determination. . . . [W]e salute the International Conference on Women in Nairobi . . . in the name of the Palestinian woman under military occupation and Zionist colonial settlement of her homeland: in the name of the Palestinian woman behind the bars of Israeli prison: in the name of the Palestinian woman whose freedom of movement is restricted by house and town arrest orders. (PUWWC 1986b, 1, 2, 27)

The PFWAC was not unique in avoiding internal gender issues before international feminist audiences—not only did other Palestinian women take the same position, but Third World women generally did so. Third World women were more likely than Western women to focus on external referents (the unequal international economic and political order) as opposed to internal ones (patriarchy or the control of women's sexuality) (Papanek 1975, 215, 221). In addition, women from the West

often argued that national liberation, international economic development, trade, and multinational activity in Third World countries—the very issues Third World women stressed—were not feminist issues, but merely, in the words of Australian Elizabeth Reid, "squabbles in no way related to women" (Reid 1975, 89; also see Bunch 1980, 80, 83; Cagatay, Grown, and Santiago 1989, 468; Papanek 1975, 220; Tinker 1981, 531). Although Western women were more sensitive to the indivisibility of the political and economic from the "feminist" by the 1985 meetings in Nairobi (Cagatay, Grown, and Santiago 1989; Gaidzanwa 1986, 596; Tinker 1986), many others continued to complain that Third World women "politicized" the women's movement (Abdulhadi 1994, 79; Basu 1986, 603).

Women of color, who began attending these meetings in higher numbers in 1980 and 1985, usually supported the positions of Third World women, particularly with respect to South Africa and Palestine (Hendessi 1986, 148; Tinker 1981, 534). Indeed, although the media generally emphasized the negative and controversial at these international feminist gatherings (Cagatay and Funk 1981, 777; Cagatay, Grown, and Santiago 1989, 471; Papanek 1975, 217), women at the meetings in Mexico City, Copenhagen, and Nairobi were deeply divided over Zionism and Palestinian self-determination (Bunch 1980, 80, 83; Cagatay, Grown, and Santiago 1989, 468, 473, n. 10; McConahay 1975; Papanek 1975; Reid 1975, 88-91; Sciolino 1986, 83; Tinker 1981, 531).

Arab and other Third World women at these and other feminist gatherings were often urged by white Western women to focus on *internal* gender oppression—how indigenous men, customs, and religions are oppressive to indigenous women through such phenomena as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and forced veiling. In response, Third World women, even those who were well-known activists on these issues in their countries, were often unwilling to discuss them before Western feminist audiences because they viewed this emphasis on internal dynamics as part of an overall agenda to culturally legitimate international economic and political inequalities. At the Copenhagen conference, for example, some Third World feminists objected to a UNICEF statement "saying it was committed to assisting governments . . . to fight the practice of clitoridectomy and other forms of genital mutilation," finding "that the crusading zeal with which Western women had seized on the issue was a mute, but nevertheless blatant, declaration that as usual it was up to the good ol' paternalistic West to come and save the Third World, even or perhaps particularly when it was a matter of saving it from its own nasty, backward habits" (Ahmed 1981, 780).

Tensions over airing the dirty laundry were as much cultural contests over cultural worth as they were battles over economic and political inequality. Palestinian and other Third World women, for example, assumed that feminist discussion of gender inequality in their societies before an international audience reflected "backwardness" or regressive "tradition," thereby undermining the legitimacy of their calls for a more egalitarian international order. PFWAC and DFLP women who actively participated in such gatherings focused, as did other Third World feminists, on the external sources of women's oppression. They attempted to avoid

gender issues that symbolized backwardness, since these were perceived to culturally legitimate the denial of Palestinian self-determination. Hegemonic feminist discourses and practices, in turn, often silenced subaltern feminist discourses by ignoring the unequal international order and reinforcing the idea that women's oppression reflected cultural backwardness in other societies.

CONCLUSION

This analysis suggests that nationalism is more empowering for women when its focus is on grassroots rather than military mobilization. Indeed, militarism and grassroots organizing are gendered mobilization strategies: one is a masculinized model of power working in the public sphere and dependent on military action, whereas the other is a feminized model of socialization requiring an active engagement with people's daily lives in their homes and neighborhoods. DFLP women's influence was also dependent on a party structure that actively mobilized and incorporated women at the rank-and-file and leadership levels in the occupied territories; a cadre of women who created a relatively democratic women's organization that was both feminist and nationalist in orientation and program; and an ideology that viewed the transformation of values that hindered women as part of an overall national-modernist project.

Women's roles, symbolic deployment, and even the feminist possibilities of Palestinian nationalism were (and continue to be) configured within a context of global inequalities in material resources and political power. Subaltern nationalisms must prove their civilizational worthiness to the claim of modern nationalism, which until recently was "considered one of Europe's most magnificent gifts to the rest of the world" (Chatterjee 1993, 4). The case for or against this cultural worth is often symbolized by subaltern women's bodies and status. Women's equal gender status is often assumed to represent modernity, making feminism, at least public feminism, a problematic project for nationalist women. On one hand, their visible roles in the political project are evidence of this modernity. On the other hand, the public airing of indigenous gender problems undermines the legitimacy of subaltern nationalisms because it becomes evidence of cultural backwardness and tradition. Because they recognized this relationship between culture and power, Palestinian feminists were unlikely to openly discuss gender inequality within Palestinian society before international audiences.

The deployment of women as markers of civilized modernity in Palestinian nationalism does not negate women's agency or its emancipatory possibilities for women. That is, even if one were to empirically find that the processes and "cultural productions" (Rose 1992, 8) of nationalisms have often reinforced male social and political power, it is problematic to assume that these processes and productions would be unquestioningly assimilated by actors and would not themselves have unintended consequences that challenge an inequitable gender order. Indeed, the emancipatory discourses of nationalism—which often focus on the just distribution

of rights, resources, and privileges—will often create expectations among subalterns within a national community that are difficult to control. DFLP women, especially those who helped create the PFWAC, were not merely symbols or markers of civilized modernity, but actors in their own right who used nationalism to push nationalist *and* feminist aspirations.

POSTSCRIPT

The uprising that began in December 1987 dramatically transformed most aspects of life in the territories and made manifest previously latent tensions between Palestinian nationalists living "inside" and those in the diaspora. Divisions within Palestinian society as to the nature of a political resolution with Israel also intensified as such a settlement appeared increasingly likely. The DFLP and the PFWAC were casualties of these tensions, each splitting into two separate organizations in late 1990. Concurrently, DFLP and/or PFWAC women, like most Palestinian women, were systematically excluded from the nationalist project and emerging state structures (Hasso 1997). Moreover, women's very presence in public space was severely regulated with the rise of the Islamist movement Hamas in 1988 (Hammami 1990) and the fragmentation of leftist-nationalist parties. The disenfranchisement of women from the DFLP and the larger nationalist movement was to some extent the result of the Palestinian move from political marginality to incorporation, or mobilization to statehood. In an international context where affairs of state are primarily the domain of men, this move was assumed, I believe, to require the "de-womaning" of Palestinian political leadership. In addition, this was a period of major power struggles in the territories as the outlines of the future Palestinian state emerged. Men, particularly those who were educated and/or had previously lived abroad, largely won that power struggle.

After an identity crisis in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Palestinian women's movement resurfaced, actively organizing to be included in the incipient state and lobbying on a number of gender issues. Indeed, the women's movement is thriving, at least as indicated by the large number of women's organizations, study centers, libraries, clinics, skills training centers, and other organizations whose activities are specifically targeted toward women. In addition, women intellectuals in particular have made an effort to critically engage, in public forums, the seemingly neutral but actually highly gendered narratives and assumptions of foreign funders and Palestinian leaders (Giacaman, Jad, and Johnson 1996). Palestinian women's organizations, however, have lost the largely rural, working-class base of women supporters they had before the intifada. This has left most working-class women without any source of feminist institutional support, a situation that has been severely compounded by high levels of unemployment and poverty (Hasso 1997). Whether Palestinian women's organizations will make a serious effort to incorporate large numbers of "regular" women into feminist frameworks remains to be seen, although the lack of resources for such mobilization and the state-focused

efforts of most of these organizations make the short-term prospects relatively bleak.

NOTES

1. I do not address Islamist-nationalist movements in the occupied territories in this article because they were quite weak until about five months into the uprising that began in December 1987 (Hammami 1990). Furthermore, my extensive longitudinal research with rank-and-file working-class women affiliated with both organizations indicates that the Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees' (PFWAC) feminist agenda was transformative in many of their lives; this issue, however, is peripheral to this article, whose focus is the ideologies and mobilization strategies of high-ranking and midlevel cadres of the two organizations.

2. I worked on the Production Committee, which coordinated skills training, quality control, marketing, and fund-raising for the PFWAC's five largest income-generating projects.

3. During town arrests, persons had to remain within a certain geographical area and check in daily with Israeli military authorities. In February 1982, PFWAC and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) cofounder Siham Barghouti was imprisoned for two-and-a-half years for violating almost two years of town arrest by traveling to the northern West Bank town of Nablus. PFWAC and DFLP leader Zahira Kamal, whose case was taken up by Amnesty International in 1984, was under town arrest from 1980 to 1986, the longest period that any woman in the territories has been under town arrest (Najjar 1992, 129, 135, 138).

4. Two of the 11 men had B.A. degrees, one had a B.S., one had a Ph.D, five had completed high school, one was studying (in 1995) to take his secondary school matriculation (*tawjihi*) exams, and one had not completed high school. This gender differential in education is contrary to the overall pattern in similar age categories, according to a 1992 survey of the territories (Heiberg 1993, 136). The DFLP and PFWAC were particularly attractive to relatively educated women. The PFWAC often targeted as local leaders "respected" women—such as school teachers and high school and college graduates—who by definition tended to be relatively better educated, based on the accurate assumption that they would be more effective at mobilizing other women in their communities (Amneh Hasan Theeb, interview, November 29, 1995).

5. The Palestine Communist Party (PCP), whose work was also nonmilitary in orientation, never reached the membership levels of the DFLP or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in the territories.

6. The DFLP-affiliated Worker's Unity Bloc (WUB) began by organizing among the increasingly large percentage of Palestinian migrant laborers who worked in Israel. These workers were either unrepresented or ineffectively represented by the Israeli Histadrut union and had been ignored by Palestinian unionists in the territories. Although the WUB's bargaining power on Israeli factory floors and construction sites was extremely limited, migrant workers were unionized *in their villages and towns*, where the WUB coordinated the provision of low-cost or free services such as health care, legal aid, and athletic and cultural events, activities that gained it a "large following in a relatively short time" (Hiltermann 1991, 71).

7. These restrictions arise from a kinship system that Deniz Kandiyoti has called "classic patriarchy," marked by the patrilocally extended household as either a reality or a "powerful cultural ideal" (Kandiyoti 1988, 278-79). In such a system, a bride establishes her place in her husband's family by producing male offspring (1988, 279), and female sexuality is an important locus of "corporate" control (Kandiyoti 1987, 325).

8. By 1987, approximately 2 to 3 percent of women in the territories were affiliated with one of the four women's organizations, "10 percent used their services, and a total of 15-20 percent were involved in them in some way" (Strum 1992, 66).

9. Approximately 500 women attended PFWAC-organized courses training women in such projects in 1986 (Palestinian Union of Women's Work Committees [PUWWC] 1987b, 15-16).

10. In 1986, there were 21 preschools and three nurseries sponsored by the PFWAC in the territories, employing more than 38 providers who taught 965 preschoolers and cared for 40 infants and toddlers (PUWWC 1986a, 10). In 1987, these centers employed 48 providers and five directors, serving 1,504 children (PUWWC 1987b, 15). In 1986, the PFWAC coordinated 350 lectures on women's and children's diseases and illnesses and illness prevention. In addition, there were 80 lectures in various locales on "Nutrition and the Pregnant Woman," and 55 showings of health-related films (PUWWC 1987b, 15).

11. DFLP and/or PFWAC women, many of whom were teachers, taught hundreds of literacy courses beginning in the late 1970s and used those courses as a forum for nationalist and gender consciousness raising. In 1986, for example, 29 such courses were taught, attended by 312 students. In addition to 27 teachers, four directors (in coordination with educators at Birzeit University) provided training and worked on a curriculum that "focused on things related to [women's] everyday life" (PUWWC 1987b, 15).

12. When the first DFLP leadership structure in the territories, the Coordinating Committee (CC), was created in late 1977, it was composed of two women and two men. When the CC became the Central Leadership, at least half of its members were women as it expanded throughout the 1980s (M. al-Labadi, interview, November 7, 1995).

13. PFWAC relations with international women's organizations were advertised to its rank and file as part of an overall nationalist/feminist agenda. In addition to examining the demands of women's movements worldwide, for example, the May 1983 magazine included a lengthy article discussing the ties between the PFWAC and these movements (Palestinian Women's Work Committees [PWWC] 1983, 52-55).

14. Israeli women's groups generally avoided the issue of Palestinian self-determination and the occupation of the territories before 1988; the exception was the antimilitarist Women's Party, which was established in 1977 and disbanded after the 1977 Israeli elections (Sharoni 1995, 104-105).

15. I have been unable to ascertain which (if any) DFLP women attended the first International Women's Conference in Mexico City in 1975. The debates raised at that conference, however, were important in motivating DFLP women to create the PFWAC (Barghouti, personal communication, December 2, 1995). PFWAC and/or DFLP women allowed to leave the country attended the international women's conferences at Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985. They were also active in African, Latin American, Asian, and Arab conferences addressing the status of women in the Third World (Najjar 1992, 147).

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