

Impact of Islamism on Women's Rights in the Palestinian Society

Introduction

The idea of this research came up after Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections, which increased the fears of the feminist organizations and the activists of the Palestinian civil society in terms of issuing legislations and performing many activities that limited women's freedom and led to more suppression of women's rights stated in the international agreements. During the period that preceded the legislative elections, the fears of the feminist organizations increased because of the attitudes of Hamas towards women issues and the policy it will follow in the future. We find out that such fears and expectations are not only based on the oppressive practices that Hamas applied during the first Intifada, but also on the perspective that Hamas presented in its convention concerning women and their role in society, as well as on Hasan al-Banna's writings (who is the founder of the Muslim Brothers party in Egypt from which Hamas was born). Thus, it was very important to conduct a research about the impact of the Islamic movements on the Palestinian women's rights and the extent to which the Palestinian society is aware of this problem.

Throughout this research – that is divided into two parts- we try to answer two main questions: does the increase in the Islamic parties' impact on society affects the rights of the Palestinian woman? Is the Palestinian society aware of the impacts of the Islamic parties on the women's rights whether they are positive or negative? The first part of the research explores the reasons why the feminist organizations and the activists of the Palestinian civil society fear the impact of the increasing power of the Islamic parties on enhancing women's rights. The second part is a field study conducted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It aims to discover whether the Palestinian society shares the feminist organizations and the civil society's activists' fear from the period after Hamas's win in the elections. A questionnaire was designed and randomly distributed to 100 persons (males and females) in different cities in the West Bank and Jerusalem to measure the following:

- The extent to which the Palestinian women have their rights within the Palestinian society.
- The reasons that limit the women's ability to achieve all their rights.
- The effect of the Islamic parties on the women's rights.
- Whether Hamas changes its attitudes towards the women's role in the society.
- The expectations of the Palestinian people towards Hamas's policy concerning the women's issues.

The unexpected discrepancy that the research shows is that the Palestinian women don't think that the Islamic movements will negatively affect the equality between them and the males. 72% of the surveyed women think that the Islamic movements will positively affect equality between females and males. However, 68% of the surveyed men said that the Islamic movements negatively affect equality between females and males.

This result reminded me of the events that occurred before the Islamic revolution in Iran, and the main role the women had in it. Yet, this result didn't serve the women's rights. The coming days will carry the answer to the question of whether the women prefer to support the extremist religious parties. There is no doubt that the Palestinian women supported Hamas for different reasons. However, the religious factor was one of these reasons.

The characteristics of the Palestinian women's situation that make it special from the situation of other women

Women represent half of the society (49.5%). Despite the fact that the Palestinian society is inseparable from the Arab world where the traditional idea of women and their role in society is a common value, the Palestinian women's situation is defined by two main circumstances. First, by the

Israeli occupation, and second, by the discrimination against women within the Arab societies represented in percentages that vary from one state to another.

One of the Israeli occupation effects was creating new roles for women that are different from the traditional roles of women in the rest of the Arab nations. The situation of women in the Palestinian society has characteristics that make it special from the situation of women in the rest of the Arab states. The Arab traditions and norms didn't stop many Palestinian women to participate in the Palestinian national movement. Women made use of the national struggle against the Israeli occupation to improve their conditions in society. Thus, women established their institutions and private organizations since the twenties of the previous century. However, the real start of the women's participation in the political life practically began after the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in **1964**. After that the general association of the Palestinian woman was founded. Then, the Palestinian women get the "quota" in the National Council that ranged from **2%** in **1964** to **7.5%** in **1996**.

The Palestinian women actively participated in the national struggle movement against the Israeli oppression both before and during the first and second Intifada. The women' participation was mainly clear during the first Intifada. Women had a great role in the activities of the Intifada especially during the first years. However, the last years that preceded signing Oslo agreement witnessed deterioration in the women's situation especially after the Islamic parties, particularly Hamas, got stronger. Hamas strongly fought the democratic social culture. These oppressive practices were manifested in the physical assaults and throwing the fiery grenades on the women who didn't stick to the allowed dress-according to them.¹ The extension of the Islamic parties and their traditional values about women, led to create worries and fears among the Palestinian feminist movement members.

The importance of considering the Islamic parties' attitudes in Palestine similar to the Islamic parties in the Arab world:

1. The Palestinian Islamic movements were born from the Muslim Brothers and al-Jihad in Egypt. For example, Hams extended from the Muslim Brothers. Yet, the special characteristics of the Palestinian society made Hamas develop some phrases that are also taken from the Islamic values.
2. The attitudes of the Palestinian Islamic parties towards women's rights and duties within the society, are not different from the attitudes adopted by similar Arab states.
3. Most of the Islamic writings about the role of women in society are publications of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt or other religious parties that exist in the Islamic world.
4. During the Palestinian legislative elections 2006, and the Egyptian parliament elections 2005, the Muslim Brothers and Hamas adopted the same mechanisms to attract women to vote to them. Such mechanisms included taking about the participation of women in the political life and the candidature of women on the electoral lists.

The attitudes of The Muslim Brothers and al-Jihad parties in Egypt towards the role of women in society:

The issue of women's rights is considered to be one of the points on which Liberians and Islamists disagree. Liberians defend women's rights. They usually accuse the Islamic parties of seeking to deprive women from their political and civil rights, isolating them from public life, and treating them as creatures with little abilities that should be always under control of the male members of their families.² However, this attitude is not correct. The Islamists do not reject giving women some rights under the condition that the superiority should be for males,. "Making decisions". When the Muslim Brothers criticized the civil laws and equality between males and females, they didn't aim to imprison women at homes and prevent them from participating in the public life. Limiting women's freedom and giving

A dress that cover all parts of the body including the head.¹

them certain rights harmonize with their attitude. The attitudes of the Islamists concerning this issue include many contradictions. I have commented on the contradiction of the Islamists attitude, Thana' al-Masri, in her book "Behind the Hijab". She thinks that "the Islamists talk about the idea and its contradiction at the same time- the texts that they use as evidences of their ideas are too general and they can be interpreted in different ways. Studying these texts in detail, uncovers another dimension which they make sure to hide behind general phrases. When they criticize the modern civil society that allows women to work and gives them lots of rights, they do not mean that women must be imprisoned at homes, but they mean that she shouldn't be given the same political and social rights given to males. The Islamists do not mind the work of women, but under conditions and strict limits.³ This attitude is clear in the ideology of Dr. Yousef al-Qardawe about the work of women, " society itself might need women to work as doctors, nurses, teachers, and to work at other fields related to girls. It is preferable that woman must deal with other woman, not with a man. Dealing with men should only be allowed at some urgent cases that are not permanent."⁴ The ideology of I-Qardawe and other members of the Muslim Brothers does not reject giving women some rights, but these rights must be limited within the circle of females and under certain rules at work, clubs, or at hospitals.

The Islamic parties seek to support the principle of male superiority over females and not allowing women to participate in decision making. In most writings of the Muslim Brothers, there are many hints to underestimate the rational abilities of women in comparison to men. The Islamists say that the reason behind this is that women base their judgment on their emotion. The Islamists uses the saying of the prophet Mohammed – may peace be upon him- (take care of women as they were created from a rib the top of which is the most dogleg part. If you try to make it strait, you will break it. Thus, enjoy her despite of this), as an evidence, without paying any little effort to understand and analyze the meaning of the saying. While Hasan al-Banna, the general guide for the Muslim Brothers explained this saying during the weekly discussion on Thursday, he launched the idea that suggests that women base the decision making process on their emotion, he said: "the dogleg part of women is her head, the moderate part is her heart. Thus, she must be treated based on kindness not on logic and philosophy." The heads of the Muslim Brothers continue to adopt the ideology of al-Banna,. "Neglecting man to what he doesn't approve of his wife, will facilitate enjoying her by him and will not deprive him from that happiness. The prophet Mohammed- may peace be upon him- doesn't mean to present women, through what we presented before, as an evil wild creature, but he wants-as we said- to state the facts to get the person out of his dreams and illusions", al-Baher Alkholi said commenting on the same saying of the prophet Mohammed-may peace be upon him-.

The belief that the rational; abilities of women are weak is reflected in the attitudes of the Islamic parties towards the role of women in family and society, and their constant try to support the idea that men only must be responsible for the decision making process. For example, they may accept the work of women. Yet, they do not agree that women must be handling the leading positions. They say that the reason behind this is that women judge things emotionally not rationally, and that the main duties of women are those handled at their homes. "It is hard for a woman to be an excellent housewife and a productive worker", Mohammed al-Ghazali commented on this. Al-Bahy alkhoulī shared him this attitude thinking that studying farming and medicine by women," made women win nothing but getting them out of the cycle of softness and femininity afforded to them by nature, and turning them into tough creatures."

We conclude from the attitudes of the Muslim Brothers about women that they try to put themselves in a position of women protectors and savors from the modern civilization. "Man protects the woman's softness and femininity and takes care of her weakness. Thus, man is supposed to provide the woman with her basic needs and payments. The woman is protected and taken care of by her father, husband, sons, or brothers. They must provide her with her financial needs. According to Islam, she doesn't have to get herself involved in the troubles of life competing men for her earning. This is what the western woman do because of necessity. The western woman doesn't have a father, a son, or a cousin to protect her. Thus, she was forced to accept any work regardless of the salary in order not to starve

to death,"⁵ al-Qardawe commented on providing the women's financial needs by men. The leaders of the Muslim Brothers through such ideas neglect the fact that women used to participate in the fights side by side with the prophet Mohammed-may peace be upon him- and the fact that Khadeeja, used to run her trade.

What is noticeable in the ideology of the Muslim Brothers is attacking the civil laws which treat women and the feminist organizations fairly. Despite the fact that the Muslim Brothers make use of the civil society organizations, they are still fighting the Egyptian feminist movement. "the reason why the feminist extremist movements are dangerous is that they adopt opinions and choices that constitute a real direct threat to all religions, values, and humanity, especially because these feminist ideas now represent the rational set of values for many international agencies that belong to the West that shaped them in the form of international agreements imposed on all societies regardless of their different various cultures. In addition to this, the West imposes additional political pressure in case these rules are not applied worldwide. What is really more dangerous is that these organizations that belong to the United Nations are three categories (the homosexuals-the lesbian feminist-feminine centered)", Aameera al-Sanhouti said in an article she published on the website of the Muslim Brothers. "The study points out to the fact that the feminist movement focused on holding activities in the fields of education, conventions, and international constitutions to facilitate the social change process. It makes a good use of the international and the local organizations, as well as the international conferences. Through this, the feminist movement aimed to practice a pressure on states to change their local laws. What makes this process more dangerous, is that the United Nations tend to deal directly with the local organizations and make them supervisors over their countries, especially concerning women and children issues. For example, the USAID directs more than 20 million dollars to the Egyptian local organizations if the funded project is accepted by the part that provides the fund" ,Al-Sanhouti writes through the review she conducted about the feminist movement. The Muslim Brothers is just like all other political Islamic movements . They make use of the differences between the Arab traditions and the foreign norms. They also use the fact that the Arab society is sensitive towards some issues. In addition to this, they try to prevent demanding to achieve women rights presenting these rights as foreign ones. They claim that the feminist movements perform a strange agenda that is prepared for them by the foreign sponsoring associations. As part following this track, the Islamic movements accused the feminist movements to be materialistic associations that push women to be prostitutes. This is why they make women lose their dignity and honor. The western women was presented as an animalistic powerless, and irrational creature which is driven by its instincts and desires away from all religious and moral considerations. The western women is described in "Muslim girl, read to be aware", written by Saleh al-Baleehi as "available for whoever looks for passing joy." The Islamic movements neglect and reject the fact that the conventions and laws concerning women rights and resisting all kinds of discrimination against women, are the natural product of the efforts paid by representatives from most states of the world, not only the West.

"Throughout two years, the observers of the case heard some phrases that can be described at least as being "shameful". Yet, human rights organizations, the National Council of Woman Rights and other institutions that are funded by foreign sponsors do not care of what the Egyptians consider as "a shame". This case is not unique. Yet, the fact that it was the only one to be highlighted proves that these associations tend to disseminate the European culture at our society for money. That is why they held a special festival after the court law – which is still reviewed by other sides in the state as well as the religious men-, was issued." Huda Sayyed writes during the crises of proving that the child Lena is the daughter of the actor, Ahmadl al-Feshawe.

The ideology of al-Jihad is the same as that of the Muslim Brothers. Dr. Omar Abdurrahman who is the "Mofti"⁶ of al-jihad, rejects the civil law, " the legal system that opposes the system created by the creator of the earth and sky must not be applied. Thus, whoever applies them, rejects the creator's laws. Then he disbelieves in God. The claim that giving the male a bigger part of the heritage than the female is not fare, and that they should have equal shares is part of that legal system. other examples

A religious man who issue certain religious laws especially in the ambiguous cases where there is not any clear sharp religious ⁶ rule that can be applied.

of such claims include that getting married more than one is unfair to the woman, divorce is a kind of oppression towards women, and "rajem"⁷ of women are brutal acts that must not be practiced against humans,...), he said.

The main difference between al-Jihad and the Muslim Brothers concerning women issue is related to mechanism and policy. The Muslim Brothers try to apply their laws without directly crashing with the current authority unlike al-Jihad. In one of the publications of the political and cultural activities committee at the medicine faculty in Alexandria university, they use one of the sayings of prophet Mohammed-may peace be upon him- in their own way, to say that they prefer touching a dirty pig than to touch their female colleagues. Thus the publications that are issued and distributed by the Islamic groups are full of phrases and historical events that make the girl feel that everything is forbidden for her even herself. They also make the male feel that he is superior to her. As a result to this, the covered sexual craziness between the two sexes increases which makes the issues of the separation between males and females and wearing al-hijab by the Muslim women, the core of public interest and discussions.

The ideology of the Palestinian Islamic parties

The attitude of the Palestinian Islamic parties concerning women rights and duties within the Palestinian society is not different from that adopted by other Islamic parties in the Arab world. The attitude of Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brothers illustrated in his book, "the Muslim Woman", is not that far from the attitude of Hamas illustrated in its special convention about women. " The Palestinian women have an equal role in the liberation struggle to that of men. The Palestinian woman is the factory that produce real men. She has a great impact over directing and bringing up the new generations. The enemies have recognized her important critical role. They believe that if they can direct and bring her up in the way they want away from Islam, they will win. This is why they try continuously to distribute their ideas through mass media, movies, and the educational curricula with the help of their supporters who are parts of Zionist organizations. These organizations have many forms, they can be Masonic, clubs, and spying team. All of them are sources of those who seek to destroy our nation. The said Zionist organizations have great financial support that enables them to have critical roles within societies, and achieving their goals under neglecting the Islamic laws among the Muslims themselves. The Islamists must fulfill their rule to face these enemies. When Islam becomes empowered, it will be able to destroy these organizations that are the real enemies of Islam and humanity. Article eighteen of the same convention, the founders of Hamas said that " the woman at a house whose members are strugglers, has the most important role in taking care of the house, raising the children according to the Islamic values and bases, teaching them how to apply the Islamic religious duties, and getting them ready for their role in struggling. Thus, the schools where the Muslim girls study and the curricula they study must be reviewed well, to prepare Muslim girls to be good mothers who are aware of their role in the liberation struggle.

Thus, the Muslim female must be well exercised in the housewife duties. She must be economical and must not spend too much money without good management. In this way, she will be able to make her family ready to face the different obstacles that it may face. The Muslim housewife must be aware that available money is just like blood. It must run in veins only to keep bodies alive, both for children and eldest members of the family.

"Women during the early stages of the Islamic history were not used to pay attention to political issues. There are no historical records that prove that women meet with the friends of the prophet Mohammad-may peace be upon him- in Bani Sa'eda to choose a person who will be in charge of the Islamic nation matters after the prophet died. There are also no records to prove that "al Kholafa' Alrashdeen"⁸ used to gather women to discuss with them the issues of the Islamic state. there is no proof that women used to run the state matters, its policy, and wars in parallel with men," Hamed al-Betawe (the president of the religious court in Palestine who is affected by the ideas of the Islamic

⁷ Killing the woman by throwing stones at her to death as a punishment if she had a sexual relationship outside marriage.
⁸ Four wise Muslim leaders who were chosen as principals for the Islamic nation after the death of Prophet Mohammed, one after another.

parties reformists as Hasan al-Banna, Sayyed Qotob, and Yousef al-Qardawe) said in his research about human rights in Islam that was published by the centre of applied studies. Despite the fact that he mentioned the role of women in wars and that Aysha participated in al-Jamal battle, he added, "despite the fact that Islam offers women equal rights to the ones it offers to men, Islam prefers that it will be better for a woman to stay at home to have more time to take care of her children." Wise persons can not deny that it is not fair to allow women to handle political works. This is because she is emotional and very much affected by appearance, beauty, and sensitivity. This will affect which one of the candidates she will choose." Al-Betawe commented on the right of deputy.

The participation of women in the Islamic movements

The attitude of women concerning the problematic issue of women within the Islamic movements is not far from the attitude of men within the said movements. It should be pointed out, many women joined the various Islamic movements. The women themselves started to criticize the principles and values that are common in the twentieth century. The woman turned to be a reformist and some one who calls for the values and the principles of her movement. Women started to consider the religious perspective of females as the most suitable values. Thus, they believe that no one has the right to formulate women rights outside the Islam cycle. Ne'mat Sudqi, the writer of "Adorning", includes many bad words and phrases to describe the women who do not wear al-hijab, such as "the bitch", the dancer", "the prostitute", and other words...

However, the nature of the Palestine society and the national liberation process imposed that women must participate in the national liberation even within the Islamic movements. Women became responsible for new roles. Since the beginning of the first Intifada, the women who belonged to the Islamic parties participated at all levels. During the demonstrations, sit-ins, and the different activities performed. This made it possible for women to have roles within the Islamists movements. Thus, they had a great role in activating the issue of the Palestinians sent out of Palestine, arranging demonstrations, talking to the mass media, and holding supportive conferences all around Palestine.

In addition to this, women had a role in the issues of the Palestinian prisoners. They used to arrange sit-ins in front of the legislative council and demonstrations. When "al-Aqsa Intifada" broke out, they participated in the national demonstrations and other activities against the Apartheid Wall, and other practices of the Israeli occupation.

Hamas realized the importance of the women role within society. Thus, it paid many efforts to have representatives among women. Hamas succeeded in this by attracting many women through social programs. The movement also established clinics, social welfare system, beauty centers, gyms, and other social projects (for women only).

The development in the attitude of Hamas towards the role of women in society

Since Hamas was established, it has adopted traditional bases for the social relationships and the cultural values about women and their roles in society. Hamas based that attitude on some traditional historical interpretations of some traditions and norms.

During the first Intifada, Hamas tried hard to impose its attitude towards women and their roles in society. Hamas launched a campaign to force women to wear the Islamic clothes in Gaza strip. "These organized campaigns led to imposing the hijab (cover for the head) on all women who lived in Gaza including the Christian women. Hamas achieved this goal by writing phrases on walls to threaten the women who do not wear al-hijab, throwing burning grenades or stones or eggs or ruined vegetables on the women who do not stick to the Islamic legal dress. In addition to this, mosques tended to motivate males to monitor the behavior of their wives and to force them to wear the Islamic dress. Many men whether from the left or right political parties started to demand women in their families to cover their heads to avoid troubles especially at streets. Moreover, other political parties-Fateh-participated in the campaign as one of the national activists of the Intifada". Dr. Islah Jad mentioned.

With the beginning of the armed Intifada, women were the victim of using the arms and different weapons as a form of struggle. Women were accused of "losing honor and good morale". This led to kill 107 of women during 15 years, most of them were from Gaza. Hamas used this atmosphere to disseminate its attitude about women and imposing the Islamic dress, hijab, and separating between men and women as a solution of the "losing honor and good morale".

Dr. Ikhlas thinks "the fact that the national movement didn't respond immediately and sharply to Hamas's policy concerning its morale social attitude, led to a lot of complaining of the feminist activists within the national movement. The national struggle against the occupation made these activists believe that the national movement didn't consider strengthening women in the political and social fields a priority. Thus, it is the responsibility of the feminist movement to initiate its attitude about the political, economical, and social role of women throughout the national struggle process not after that. The response of the feminist movement affected the political parties, the public opinion, and the political Islamic movements that started to develop its attitudes to get to a more flexible understanding of women within the religious context."

After Oslo, Hamas used the same methodology used before by other Islamic movements in the Arab World. It started to launch a campaign against the feminist movement, especially against the Centre for Legal and Social Consultancy. This comes as a response to a project titled as "the nominal parliament" that aimed to increase the awareness of the current legislations that have many drawbacks that hindered the development of the women status and allowing them to express that they really wanted to change these legislations. "The responses of the Islamic movements were really tough. They tried hard to inflame the public to reject to deal with all feminist associations and centers that worked hard to change the implemented laws using the mosques and the current religious associations extremely. Thus, there was a wide campaign against the project and all kinds of feminist associations to question their intentions, and their programs. The following quotation was included in one of the publications of the movement "as part of applying good deed encouragement and evil prevention, we have decided to make our Palestinian people realize the reality of some of the feminist centers that started to spread widely in our country quickly as fire spreads in dry straws. These centers are funded by the West to perform all its evil plans, to destroy the family and take off the dignity and humanity of the Muslim and Arabic women and turn them into cheap things as the western women are today," Ikhlas Jad added. After that, many publications that attack the project were distributed. On 8/3/1998, a publication titled "the Muslim woman and the female secular's conspiracy" was distributed in the West Bank. Another publication titled "the religious and honor loss after the land loss through the feminist nominal parliament" signed as "Fatima al-Zahra'⁹" at the end of May 1998.

The Islamic movements realized the importance of the role of women and religious associations to reach to different diverse members of society. This led Hamas leaders to establish Islamic organizations for women for the first time. "Huda al-Islam" organization was established in 1996. "Al-Khansa'" organization was established then in 1997. Before that "the Islam's women" organization was established. It used to work within charitable fields. It didn't have any noticeable political activities. Concerning the first organization, it adapts a very strict attitude towards the modern feminist movement. Its demands are in compliance with the general attitude of the Islamic resistance movement "Hamas". The second one adopts a less extreme attitude towards the feminist movement. It thinks that the women have an issue whether it is related to the discrimination practiced against her or the submission practiced on her. Yet, to solve all these problems, we need to go back to our religion, to stick to it. They included the three associations of the general consortium of the volunteer associations.

"The programs on which the Islamic organizations for women based, are similar to the programs adopted by the charitable organizations or the feminist associations at their beginnings, such as arranging an exhibition where many things -that the housewife like- are sold as man-made things, food, etc... in addition to this they used to arrange many group trips, lessons in preaching and teaching

The name the youngest daughters of prophet Mohammed-may peace be upon him'- was called by. It means the rosy Fatima, ⁹ because her cheeks color was close to the rosy color.

the different aspects of Islam that are mostly based on extreme interpretations of religion especially concerning women. The Islamic movements used to defend men's right to get married to more than one woman (Instead of adultery practiced in the Western countries.), the right of men to supervise women, the submission of women to men in all matters that are not contradicted with Islam, and focusing on the idea of the complementation of the role of women and men. The role of women is to take care of her family, whereas the role of man is to work hard. These associations basically include female teachers, wives of the Islamic movements' leader, workers at religious associations, and housewives. These associations target the housewives in the first place and the religious women who go continuously to the mosques," Ikhlas Jad added.

The Palestinian legislative election and the role of women in it

The Palestinian legislative election that took place in 1996 was the first elections that occur during the modern age. The two Blocs: Popular and Democratic, Hamas, and al-Jihad, didn't participate in the said elections. The Palestinian women participated in the elections for the first time as candidates and voters. However, women's participation in the process of decision making in the political field is still limited comparing to the huge great sacrifices they tend to offer and the leadership field experience they acquired. (27) Palestinian women were filed in the legislative council comparing to (646) of men. The first woman who was nominated as a president was Sameeha Khaleel. This was the first time in the Arabic history where women got filed for such position. She got 7 to 10 % of the votes. Five female candidates won and became members in the legislative council. They include: Dr. Hanan Ashrawee, Dalal Salameh, Intesar al-Wazeer, Rawyah al-Shawwa, and Jameeli Sa'eed.

The second Palestinian election was supposed to occur before four years. Yet, it was delayed due to many events that occur in Palestine. Thus, the first council lasts for ten years. Then, many meetings were hold in Cairo under an Egyptian supervision between the president Mahmoud Abbas, and all other Palestinian resistance parties. One of the basic items of their meeting agenda was to hold the elections on its due date 25/1/2009. The new form of the legislative council includes 132 members. 84 of them are from Jerusalem and the West Bank. 48 are from Gaza. The legislative Council includes 17 women (6 Hamas, 8 Fateh, one Popular Bloc, one Independent Palestine, one The Third Road). The percentage of women who belong to Hamas is 35% of the winning women.

The Islamic political movements got to pay more attention to the idea of the participation of women in the elections. More than one Islamic personality emphasized on the importance of the involvement of women in the political field so that the woman will "build a public Islamic opinion among women" Hamas followed the policy of the political Islamic movement through the legislative council elections, it added women issues o its electoral program, it also considered the issue of the Palestinian women as the twelfth one in the Palestinian society issues. Within this program, Hamas focused on supporting women status away from the external norms that partially emerged into the Palestinian culture from the West. The movement's agenda to deal with the issue was:

- assuring the women legal rights through activating the fair legislations and completing the legislative format that support their rights, and achieving their role in the group leadership.
- strengthening women with the Islamic culture, making them aware of their legal rights, and emphasizing that dignity, respect, and commitment must be what characterizes her personality.
- activating the role of the volunteer feminist association as they are considered part of the civil society.
- using the energy of women at general work, and highlighting their role within society.
- emphasizing that family and strengthening the relationships between its members are the basic factors that persist the social values and morals.
- The Palestinian woman is a partner in struggle, resistance, and building. Her civil and religious rights are guaranteed.

- supporting the stability of the family through:

- Developing the legislatives concerning women in a way that guarantees the stability of the family and protects new generations.
- Cooperating with the families that lost their houses because of the Israel occupation, or the families that have members who were imprisoned or followed and wanted by the occupation.
- Protecting women from all types of abuse and use in marketing and all other illegal works.

Despite the fact that Hamas's electoral program didn't point either directly or implicitly to the international conventions and agreements that aim to stop the discrimination against women, the movement got a great support from females. This is mainly because Hamas tended to attract women. The results of the studies and surveys reflected that, as they proved that the number of females supporting Hamas exceeds the number of male. (Needs a reference).

The general shared perspective of the Islamic movements about women's rights

Based on the previous explanations, we conclude that the Islamic movements in general, and the Palestinian Islamic movements particularly consider that giving the women the same rights as men a practice that ignores religion and getting out of the Islamic circle. Thus, any try to face this perspective is considered as a sharp criticism to the core basics of Islam. In addition to this, any try to think deeply in this matter to find a way in between the religious teachings and the requirements of the age is considered as denying the orders of God. In other words, it is a kind of disbelieving in God, and performing a strange Western agenda. This is the general perspective of the Islamic movements about women issues. This subject is always discussed at different or connected levels. Yet, these levels can be determined as follows:

- 1- The perspective of the Islamic movements are similar about the women's rights. They base their perspective on old interpretations of the traditional religious teachings that are usually stemmed from the traditional norms within culture and not from the Islamic religion. Yet, the extent of freedom and rights given to women differs from one movement and another.
- 2- The Islamic writings about women emphasizes that "the natural place of women is their homes. Their natural role is to take care of their husbands, families, and children. Their participation in society must be under limitations and restrictions."
- 3- Determining the work field where women can work in medicine, nursery, teaching, sewing, or making special sectors for females at factories that separates between females and males.
- 4- Underestimating the psychological and rational abilities of women compared to men, and even denying their natural ability to lead and working at public positions.
- 5- The moderate Islamic movements as (Muslim brothers –Hamas) seek to reach the different levels of women through social and economical services. Women's votes and the democratic methodologies are used in politics.
- 6- Trying to separate between the feminist movement and women, accusing them of adopting a western agenda that opposes the eastern traditions, and criticizing the civil laws, while using the same methodologies of the feminist movements to spread among women.

Results analysis

- The extent to which the Palestinian women enjoy their rights within the Palestinian society.

* 60% of men and 58% of women think that women have their political rights. However, 40% of men and 42% of women think that women do not have their political rights.

* 56% of men and women think that women have their economical and social rights. Wherever, 44% of men and women think that the opposite is right.

* 72% of men and 66% of women think that women have their cultural rights.

* 88% of men and 80% of women think that women –relatively speaking- have some rights.

* 6% of men and 14% of women think that women do not have real noticeable rights in the Palestinian society.

* 76% of men and 66% of women think that the Palestinian women do not have all their rights. However, 24% of men and 34% of women think that the opposite is right.

Table number (1)

Do Palestinian women have all their rights		Political rights		Economical and social rights		Cultural rights		Relatively , some rights		Enjoying actual rights	
NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
38	12	20	30	22	28	14	36	6	44	3	47
%76	24%	40%	60%	44%	56%	28%	72%	12%	88%	%6	94%

Table number 1 (b) women

Do Palestinian women have all their rights		Political rights		Economical and social rights		Cultural rights		Relatively, some rights		Enjoying actual rights	
NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
33	17	21	29	22	28	17	33	10	40	7	43
66%	44%	42%	58%	44%	56%	34%	66%	20%	80%	14%	86%

- The reason that hinder women from having their rights

* 90% of men and 83% of women think that traditions and norms are considered as one reason why women can't have their rights.

* 85% of men and 92% of women think that the Israeli occupation is one of the reasons that prevent women from having their rights.

* 81% of men and 79% of women think that preferring men to women is one of the reasons that prevent women from having their rights.

* 58% of men and 44% of women think that the Islamic movements prevent women from having their rights.

* 33% of men and 5% of women think that there are other reasons that prevent women from having their rights.

* 4% of men and women didn't answer these questions.

Table number 1

Norms and traditions		the Israeli occupation		Preferring males to females		Islamic movements		Other reasons	
NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
5	43	7	41	9	39	20	28	32	16
10%	90%	15%	85%	19%	81%	42%	58%	67%	33%

Table number 2 (b) women

Norms and traditions		The Israeli occupation		Preferring males to females		Islamic movements		Other reasons	
NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
8	40	4	44	10	38	27	21	46	2
17%	83%	8%	92%	21%	79%	56%	44%	95%	5%

- The impact of the Islamic movements on women's rights

* 68% of men and 28% of women think that the Islamic movements negatively affect the issue of equality between men and women.

* 32% of men and 72% of women think that the Islamic ,movements positively affect the issue of equality between men and women.

* 54% of men and 30% of women think that the Islamic movements negatively affect the political participation of women.

* 46% of men and 70% of women think that the Islamic movements positively affect the political participation of women.

* 34% of men and 42% of women think that the Islamic movements negatively affect giving women their economical rights.

* 66% of men and 58%of women think that the Islamic positively affect giving women their economical rights.

* 68% of men and 52% of women think that the Islamic movements negatively affect the participation of women in the decision making process.

* 32% of men and 48% of women think that the Islamic movements positively affect the participation of women in the decision making process.

* 52% of men and 34% of women that the Islamic movements have a negative effect on the educational level of women.

* 48% of men and 66% of women think that the Islamic movements have a positive effect on the educational level of women.

* 44% of men and 34% of women think that the Islamic movements have a negative effect on women's health.

* 56% of men and 66% of women think that the Islamic movements have a positive effect on women's health.

* 72% of men and 52% of women think that the Islamic movements have a negative effect on the issue of women's work.

* 28% of men 48% of women think that the Islamic movements have a positive effect on the issue of the women's work.

* 72% of men and 62% of women think that the Islamic movements negatively affect the issue of the women's installation of leading positions.

*28% of men and 38% of women think that the Islamic movements negatively affect the issue of the women's installation of leading positions.

*46% of men and 44% of women think that the Islamic movements negatively affect the issue of giving women their personal rights.

*54% of men and 66% of females think that the Islamic movements positively affect the issue of giving women their personal rights.

Table number 3: men and women

The effect	men				women			
	positive	%	negative	%	positive	%	negative	%
Equality between men and women	16	32%	34	68%	36	72%	14	28%
Women participation in politics	23	46%	27	54%	35	70%	15	30%
Women's economical rights	33	66%	17	34%	29	58%	21	42%
Participation in decision making	16	32%	34	68%	24	48%	26	52%
Educational level	24	48%	26	52%	33	66%	17	34%
Women's health	28	56%	22	44%	33	66%	17	34%
Women's work	14	28%	36	72%	24	48%	26	52%
Installation of women	14	28%	36	72%	19	38%	31	62%

to leading positions								
Personal rights	27	54%	23	46%	33	66%	17	44%

the

-Did Islamic

movements change their perspective of the women's role in society?

* 62% of men and 46% of women think that the Islamic movements changed their perspective towards women.

*54% of men and 46% of women think that women are not considered equal to men in participation within the Islamic movements.

Table number (4): men

Changing the Islamic movements perspective		Considering women equal to men in participation	
NO	YES	NO	YES
19	31	27	23
38%	62%	54%	46%

Table number 4 (b): women

Changing the attitude of the Islamic movements		Considering women equal to men in participation	
NO	YES	NO	YES
27	23	23	27
54%	46%	46%	54%

- The reasons why Hamas filed women as candidates on the electoral lists

* 50% of men and 70% of women think that believing in the women's role is the reason.

* 76% of men and 58% of women think that attracting women to vote is the reason.

* 78% of men and 70% of women think that pretending to be democratic is the reason.

* 66 of men and 72% of women think that increasing women's role is one reason.

* 40% of men and 32% of women think that there are more other reasons.

Table number 5 (a): men

Believing in the role of women		Attracting women to vote		Pretending to be democratic		Increasing women's role		Other reasons	
NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
25	25	7	43	11	39	22	28	30	20
50%	50%	14%	76%	22%	78%	44%	66%	60%	40%

Table number 5 (b)

Believing in the role of women		Attracting women to vote		Pretending to be democratic		Increasing women's role		Other reasons	
NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
15	35	21	29	15	35	14	36	34	16

30%	70%	42%	58%	30%	70%	28%	72%	68%	32%
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- The expectations of the Palestinian public opinion of Hamas's policy towards women issues

*40% of men and 60% of women expect that Hamas will apply the conventions and laws.

* 18% of men and 60% of women expect Hamas will actively apply the political rights of women.

* 58% of men and 80% of women think that Hamas will emphasize women's right in candidature and voting.

* 28% of men and 44% of women expect that Hamas will represent women both on the international and governmental levels.

* 40% of men and 52% of women expect that Hamas will emphasize the women's representation within movements.

* 52% of men and 40% of women expect that Hamas will apply the legal and civil equality.

* 34% of men and 56% of women expect that Hamas will change the discriminatory laws.

*64% of men and 70% of women expect that Hamas will provide equal educational opportunities.

* 36% of men and 60% of women expect that Hamas will increase the participation of women in the working forces.

* 48% of men and 50% of women expect that Hamas will determine the work field of women in education, and health care.

*60% of men and 42% of women expect that Hamas will not allow women to fulfill leading positions.

* 58% of men and 70% of women expect that Hamas will improve health services.

*52% of men and 24% of women expect that Hamas will promote "early marriage".

* 48% of men and 40% of women expect that Hamas will emphasize the theory of differences between individuals.

* 64% of men and 66% of women expect that Hamas will provide protection from violence.

* 42% of men and 34% of women expect that Hamas will not pay attention to women's rights.

Table number 6 : men and women

change	men				women			
	YES	%	NO	%	YES	%	NO	%
Applying conventions and laws	20	40%	30	60%	30	60%	20	40%
Applying political rights	9	18%	41	82%	30	60%	20	40%
Right of voting and candidature	39	58%	11	22%	40	80%	10	20%
Representing women on the international and	14	28%	36	72%	22	44%	38	56%

governmental levels.								
Representing women in movements	20	40%	30	60%	26	52%	24	48%
Legal and civil equality	26	52%	24	48%	20	40%	30	60%
Changing discriminatory laws	17	34%	33	66%	29	56%	22	44%
Equality in educational opportunity	32	64%	18	36%	35	70%	15	30%
Increasing the participation of women in the working force	18	36%	32	64%	30	60%	20	40%
Determining the work fields of women to education and health care	24	48%	26	52%	25	50%	25	50%
Not allowing women to fulfill leading positions	30	60%	20	40%	21	42%	29	58%
Improving health care services	29	58%	21	42%	35	70%	15	30%
Promoting early marriage	26	52%	24	48%	12	24%	38	76%
Emphasizing the theory of the individual differences	24	48%	26	52%	20	40%	30	60%
Providing protection from violence	32	64%	18	36%	33	66%	17	34%
Not paying attention to the women's rights	21	42%	29	58%	17	34%	33	66%

Comments on the results

- Few women think that women do not have practical actual rights (14%). However, 80% of women think that women –relatively speaking –have some rights.

- Most men (76%) think that women do not have all their rights. The percentage of men who think that is 10% more than the percentage of women who think that women enjoy all their rights. This discrepancy in the percentages between men and women means that men are more aware of the problems facing women in the Palestinian society than women themselves.

- Despite the fact that most men believe that the Islamic movements are one reason why women can not have their rights, it got the least percentage among other reasons that prevent women from having all their rights. 58% of men think that the Islamic movements are one reason why women can't have their rights. However, only 44% of women think the same. Other reasons got more percentages. Traditions and norms were considered by 90% of men and 83% of women as a reason for preventing women from their rights. 85% of men and 92% of women think that the Israeli occupation is a reason for that. In addition to this, 81% of men and 79% of women think that the reason for preventing women from having their rights, is preferring males to females within society.

- Men and women have different opinions towards the effect of the Islamic movements on women rights. For example, 68% of men think that the Islamic movements have a negative effect on the issue of equality between men and women. However, 72% of women have a contradictory opinion towards this issue. 54% of men think that there is a negative effect on the political participation of women. However, 70% of women think that there is a positive effect on the political participation of women. 52% of men think that the Islamic movements negatively affected the educational level of women. However, 66% of women think that they have a positive effect.

- Most men and women agreed that the Islamic movements positively affected giving women economical right, (66% of men – 58% of women), health care rights (56% of men – 66% of women), and personal rights (54% of men – 56% of women).

- Most men and women are aware of the negative effects of the Islamic movements on the participation in decision making (68% of men – 52% of women), the work of women (72% of men – 52% of women), and installation of women to leading positions (72% of men – 62% of women).

- Most women do not realize that there is a threat to giving them their rights under the increasing power of the Islamic movements. Most women think that the Islamic movement will positively affect the issue of equality between women and men (72%), the political participation of women (70%), the educational level (66%). Health care (66%), and the personal rights (56%).

- Most men think that the Islamic movements have positive effects on the economical conditions (66%), health care (56%), and the personal rights (56%).

- Most women are aware of the negative effect of the Islamic movements on the women participation in the decision making process (52%), work of women (52%), and the installation of women to leading positions (62%).

- Most men are aware that Islamic movements negatively affect the issue of equality between men and women (68%), the political participation of women (54%), the women's participation in the decision making process (68%), the educational level (52%), the work of women (72%), and the installation of women to leading positions (72%).

- There is a discrepancy between the ideas of men and women about whether the Islamic movement changed its attitude towards women in society. 62% of men think that the attitude has changed. However, 54% of women think the opposite. Most men 54% think that women do not have the same equal participation of men within the Islamic movement. However, most women 54% think the opposite.

- The percentages of men and women expressing their opinions about the reasons for the candidature of women by Hamas on their lists show a discrepancy between the perspectives of women and men concerning the role of women within the movement. Most men think that the main reason for this is pretending to be democratic (78%), attracting women to make them vote for Hamas (76%), the increase of the role of women (66%), and the belief in the role of women (50%). However, most women think that the main reason for this is the increase of the role of women (72%), the belief in the role of women – pretending to be democratic (70%), and attracting women to get their votes (58%).

- Women were more optimistic than men in the ability of Hamas's government to make positive decisions towards the issue of women. Most women think that if Hamas's government succeeds in facing the international siege and the economical crisis, it will apply the conventions (60%), give women their political rights (60%), emphasizing women's right in candidature (80%), representing women in the movements (52%), changing discriminatory laws (56%), equality in the educational opportunities (70%), and increasing the participation of women in the work force (60%), improving the health care services (70%), and providing protection from violence (66%).

- Most men were less optimistic about the ability of Hamas to follow positive policies towards the issue of women. However, most men think that Hamas will emphasize the right of women to vote (58%), to have legal civil rights equal to those of men (52%), equality in the educational opportunity (64%), improving the health care services (58%), and providing protection from violence (64%).

- Most men think that Hamas will pay attention to providing women with their rights (58% of men – 66% of women). The motivation for this is the fact that the issue of women is being discussed openly. Yet, it is not a priority under the Israeli occupation, the internal problems, and the economical obstacles.

- Through the field study and results analysis, we noticed that women pay more attention to education and health care. We also reached to the same conclusion from the workshop that was performed by development study program conducted by Birzeit University. The female participants there specified the prior cores of women needs as follows:

1. Education.
2. Health care.
3. Women rights as human rights.
4. The international conventions concerning women, especially violence against women.
5. Participation in the decision making process.

Based on the above, we conclude that the Islamic movements in general, and Hamas in particular, fulfill the needs of women at the fields of education, and health care. They may also improve the economical rights given to women.

Summary

From the beginning of the Palestinian national liberation struggle, women participated in all kinds of resistance side by side with men to free the land and establish the independent Palestinian state. However, after Oslo agreement and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority, the Palestinian feminist movement realized that improving the social and economical status of women is not considered as a priority to the national forces. In addition to this, the arousal of the Islamic movements was a threat to the achievements of the Palestinian women and the continuous efforts paid to improve the women status in the Palestinian society.

At the same time, the political Islamic movements started to pay a special attention to women especially in the issue of women participation in the election. More than one Islamic leader emphasized how important it is that women work at the political field so that they can create "an Islamic public attitude among women". In deed, the Palestinian Islamic movements succeeded in persuading many women to join Hamas through their social and economical programs. These services are considered a priority to most women. During the legislative elections in 2006, the studies and survey results

reflected that the movement achieved a great support from women. It is proved that the number of women supporting Hamas is more than the number of men.

The research shows that women are more optimistic than men in Hamas's ability to improve their status and solve their problems. They also hope that Hamas's government will improve their social and economical status and achieve equality between them and men. However, men do not trust Hamas's government. They do not think that Hamas will be able to improve women status in Palestine. Yet, they think that Hamas will be able to provide better educational and healthy conditions for women and that it will be able to protect women from violence.

Through the attitudes of the Islamic movements in general and Hamas in particular, we think that despite the fact that a great sector of women doesn't have the same fears as the feminist movements about the increase of the Islamic movements impact on achieving women's rights within the Palestinian society, these fears are real and stemmed from the attitude of the Islamic movements about women and their role in society. Their attitudes are based on previous oppression against women. In spite of the progress in the Islamic movements and their attempt to attract women, the real reason behind this is the importance of the role of women in the election. In addition to this, the Islamic movements are unable to achieve women's rights and emphasize equality between men and women in the Palestinian society. Hamas's electoral program didn't directly or indirectly point to the international conventions to stop the discrimination against women.

Accordingly,, we conclude that the Palestinian feminist movement must not only face the traditional radical ideas about the role of women in society, but also the dissemination of silly ideas among women about the ability of the Islamic movements to achieve women's rights and equality between men and women, as well as the continuous efforts paid to separate the feminist movement from women. The Islamic movements claim that they protect women from the modern civilization that is based on the western degradation of women.