

GENDER PALESTINE

8 Women to narrate Palestine 8th of March 2011- 8th of March 2012

The Concept

Palestinian Women have always been active players in shaping the Palestinian struggle and thus play a key role at the political, economic, social and cultural levels within the national movement. They continue being submitted to the consequences of occupation, siege, exile, political and social discriminations. Furthermore they pursue on a daily basis their fight for freedom, dignity and equality.

Belgian women organisations and solidarity movements with Palestine have therefore decided to invite, between the Women's day 2011 and 2012, 8 Palestinian women from the West Bank, including Jerusalem, Gaza, Israel (a Palestinian from 1948) and exile (Lebanon). They have in common their belonging to the quest resulting from the Nakba in 1948. Through their journey their life, they reflect the Palestinian struggle in its different dimensions. They pursue until today their quest for a national and social liberation.

The 8 Women will be in Brussels between the 6th and the 11th of March, thanks to the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, to take part in High-level meetings in the European Parliament and the Belgian Senate, as well as to participate in public conferences and in the Closing Ceremony scheduled on the 10th of March in Les Halles, where the Palestinian singer Rim Banna will perform in a unique concert in Belgium.

The Invitees

- Rania Elias, Director of the Jerusalem Festival
- Naela Khalil, journalist, Samir Kassir award for the freedom of expression
- Nadia Abu Nahla, Director of a coalition of women organisations in the Gaza Strip
- Amal Elsana-Alh'jooj, Director of the *Arab Jewish Center for Equality Empowerment and Cooperation*, Naqab
- Mona Taneeb, leading figure of the rural women movement, Tulkarem
- Amneh Jibril, General Union of Palestine Women, President of Lebanon branch
- Rana El Nashashibi, political and social activist in Jerusalem
- Naila Ayesh, Executive Director of the *Women's Affairs Center*, Gaza

Patronage

The initiative is placed under the Patronage of 8 Women European Parliamentarians:

- Isabelle Durant, Vice-President of the European Parliament
- Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Vice-President of the European Parliament
- Diana Wallis, Former Vice-President of the European Parliament
- Luisa Morgantini, Former Vice-President of the European Parliament
- Eva Joly, Chairwoman of the Committee on Development
- Eva-Britt Svensson, Former Chairwoman of the Committee on Women's rights and gender equality
- Véronique De Keyser, Vice-President of the Middle East Working group
- Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Vice-President of the Middle East Working group

Rania Elias



Director of Yabous Productions in Jerusalem, Palestine since 1998, Rania Elias has been dealing with local and international Public Relations, business management, events management, project coordination and funding. She has been the director of the Jerusalem Festival since 1998.

She is on the board of trustees of several organizations and networks, both Palestinian and international (Riwaq, YWCA, Rawdat El Zuhour, Freemuse etc), and member of the Steering Committee of PCABI. She is a major speaker in several international and local conferences and meetings dealing with cultural issues in Palestine.

She contributed to several studies during her work as a Fieldwork Researcher and has been active in voluntary social work involved in dealing with cases of abuse in various human rights issues.

She was the acting Director of the Bethlehem International Festival 1995 – Palestinian Ministry of Culture, and the Administrative Director of Riwaq- Center for Architectural Conservation – Ramallah (1995-1998).

In 2007 she was appointed as a member of the national and executive committee for Al Quds – Capital of Arab Culture 2009 and head of the events committee.

Naila Ayesh



Born in Jerusalem in 1960. She was arrested by the Israeli army in 1987, during the first Intifada, for belonging to a Palestinian Student Union. Subject to torture, she had a miscarriage. She was released due to the pressure of women for peace activists. In 1988, her husband was deported out of the occupied Palestinian territory, while she was forbidden to leave the territory. On the 5th of October 1988, the Israeli government placed her in administrative detention for 6 months, with her recently born child, Majd. In 1990, she was finally able to join her husband while being forbidden of returning to Palestine for two years. She came back to Palestine in 1994.

Since 1996, Naila Ayesh has been director of the Gaza-based Women's Affairs Training and Research Center, a non-governmental organization devoted to empowering women to be full partners in Palestinian society, particularly in the areas of development and social change. Among the Center's offerings are programs in communications, delivering instruction in journalism, grassroots campaigning, and civic education; development, in which women learn all aspects of micro-enterprise projects from feasibility to marketing; and institution building, providing training in gender mainstreaming, administration development, lobbying, and NGO program planning and management. For several years, Naila spent her time between Gaza and Ramallah, where part of her family resides, despite the huge difficulties to travel between the two shores of the occupied Palestinian territory due to the severe restrictions imposed by the occupation on the movement of Palestinians. Since 2007, she lives in Ramallah, while trying to travel as much as possible to the Gaza strip.

In 2007, Naila was a co-recipient of the Woman of the Year International Prize Presidency of the Regional given by the Council of Valle d'Aosta under the High Patronage of the President of the Italian Republic. (02.2010)

Amal Elsana-Alh'jooj



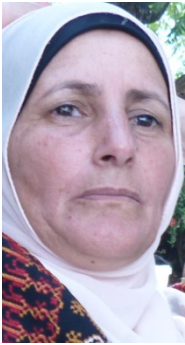
Ms. Amal Elsana Alhjooj was born in 1972 in an Arab Bedouin village in the south of Israel, to a family of 13 children. Upon completing her high school education in the village, she went on to receive her BA in social work in Israel and her MA in community development from McGill University in Canada. She began her career as a community organizer when she was 14, and at the ripe age of 17, established the first Arab Bedouin women's organization.

Today, Amal is one of the key shapers of public opinion regarding the status of the Arab minority and the status of women in Israel. She is a member of the Commission for Economic Development of the Arab Sector; a member of the Steering Committee of Women Lawyers for Human Rights; a member of the professional committee of the Employment Creation Division of the JDC.

Amal is the recipient of numerous honors and awards. To list a few: in 2008 she was the closing key-note speaker of the Goldman Sachs Global Leaders Institute; in 2007 she was the international honoree of Seeking Common Ground in Denver Colorado; in 2005 she was a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize within the framework of the "One Thousand Women" submission; in 2003 she won the Lady Globes "Career Women of the Year" award.

Amal is the Co-Executive Director with Vivian Silver of NISPED, the Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development and the founding director of AJEEC – NISPED's Arab Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation. She is married to Anwar Alh'jooj, a lawyer, and the mother of seven-year old twins.

Mona Taneeb



Born in 1964 in Balata refugee camp, Mona Taneeb joined in the 80's the women's rights movement in Naplouse. As a grass-root militant, she took part in the uprising of the Palestinian people during the first Intifada.

She is today the Head of the women's club in the village of Irtah near Tulkarem, as well as a member of the Executive Committee of the Association for the rehabilitation of rural women. She is also an active member in the Popular Committees against the wall and colonisation.

Mona, a mother of five, continues to daily farm her land enclosed between the annexation wall and an Israeli illegal chemical plant.

Naela Khalil

Ramallah (born in Balata refugee camp)

***Education:***

- BA, Journalism/ Al-Najah National University, 2001.
- Diploma in international print Journalism at the Thomson Foundation in Cardiff, UK, 2005
- Two ToT (Training of Trainers) in Fojo Journalist Training Center, Sweden 2008.

Awards:

- Winner of the "Journalist of the Year 2005 Award" awarded by the Thomson Foundation at the end of the Diploma (Don Rowlands Award)
- Winner of Alqatan foundation prize for feature story for journalists in West bank and gaza under 35 years old. 2005..
- Winner of Defence for Children International- Palestine section prize for best feature about children in Palestine 2007.
- Winner of the second price of ICRC competition about the international humanitarian law. Arab country and North Africa 2008
- Winner of EU journalism award Samir Kassir Award for freedom of press"2008

Work Experience:

- Reporter for Al-Ayyam Newspaper/ Ramallah 2003- present.
- Part time Media Literacy Project Coordinator, and Editor in Al-Hal Newspaper in Media Development Center – Birzeit University, 2007- present.
- Special correspondent for AL Akhbar Newspaper in Lebanon 2007- present (Free Lance).
- Reporter for humanitarian news and analysis "IRIN NEWS"2005 – 2006.
- Reporter for AL-Mara' el –Muslema magazine, UAE 2003.
- Reporter for Al-Dustor Jordanian Newspaper 2002-2003.

Nadia Abu Nahla



Born in 1964, Nadia Abu Nahla, has been an activist in woman rights for over 25 years. She is well known in the Gaza Strip and West Bank for her leadership of large-scale empowerment movements aimed to enhance the participation of women in reform and nation building through lobbying to ensure that the principles of human and women's rights guide the drafting of laws and policies (such as Family law). She has been the Manger of the Woman's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) Gaza Branch since 1996, and has a longstanding experience as gender equality advocate, grassroots activist and women's studies researcher. WATC is a coalition of 7 women's organizations, 3 women's centers and individual women activists that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, to develop the role of women in society, and to empower women to assume decision-making positions.

Ms. Abu Nahla holds several higher diplomas in the fields of NGOs Management and Empowerment (Birzeit University and Turin Institute) and a Bachelor of Art in History from the Islamic University in the Gaza Strip.

She worked as General Coordinator of the Palestinian Women's Committees in the Gaza Strip between 1984 and 1994. She worked also as maternity and childhood project coordinator for the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in the Gaza Strip, Palestine from 1991 till 1995. She established a group of Palestinian women known as (the women united council) in the first uprising Intifada in 1987.

In 1996, she served as Women and Elections Project Coordinator and worked with women on raising their skills and building their capacity to assess and meet their needs, mainly with regards to women's involvement in the political process. She worked on enhancing the society's awareness of women's issues and achievements through campaigns, radio and TV programs, theatre, and newspapers

In 2003, she served as a key member on the advisory committee on Combating Violence Against Women to the Palestinian NGO network.

In 2008, she served as advisory Committee Member for the Gender Equality Initiative of the UNRWA

Rana El Nashashibi



Born in Jerusalem in 1962 to a liberal and politically active family and being the youngest of her four siblings, Rana Nashashibi grew up to be opinionated and critical-minded. She graduated from Schmidt's Girls' College in Jerusalem and went on to Birzeit University where she completed her undergraduate degree in business administration in 1982. The student life at Birzeit during that period helped Rana to develop political ideologies and views which were influenced at an early age by the loss of her eldest brother, Said, who died while with the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon. Her activism was based on her belief in social and political justice and, above all, the emancipation of people from all forms of oppression. This was solidified in her work with grassroots movements such as the Union of Palestinian Working Women's Committees and the trade unions. Such movements played a very significant role in paving the way for popular resistance during the first Intifada, which began in 1987.

During the years 1982-1984, Rana was in the United States, where she completed her master's degree in psychological counselling. Whether through working in the field of mental health, teaching at the university, or engaging in political and feminist activism, being a non-conformist and challenging norms have always led her to action. Rana played a pivotal role in the introduction of alternative therapies to the prevailing bio-medical treatment in the eighties, such as psychotherapy, play therapy, and expressive art therapies. The Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC) under Rana's leadership became a leading mental health organisation that was successful in introducing counselling services and models such as school counselling in private and UNRWA schools in the oPt and the integration of mental health in primary health services. These work models were later adopted by various Palestinian government ministries.

In 1996, in another effort to set an example of how to create change, Rana decided to run as a candidate for representative of Jerusalem in the first-ever Palestinian Legislative Council. Unfortunately she was unsuccessful.

Rana has written several articles and contributed to several publications on the national and social role of NGOs in Palestine as well as a chapter in a book on art and political violence. She served on the steering committee of the Palestinian NGO Network for three and a half years and took an active part in the Coalition for Jerusalem. She remains very active in the struggle to defend Palestinian rights in Jerusalem.

Amneh Jibril Sulaiman



Born in 1953, in a refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon. She holds a B.A degree in English Literature from the Beirut Arab University in 1977. She participated in organizing workshops on rehabilitation, Palestinian women's affairs, illiteracy, child labour and gender issues. She worked with the UNRWA and started voluntary work with students in 1972. She played a leading role in the Chatila refugee camp during the late 70's and 80's.

In 1982, she was elected Head of the General Union of Palestinian Women/ Lebanon Branch. Then in 1983 she became member of the Palestinian National Council.

She was nominated, alongside seven other Palestinian women, for the Noble Peace Prize 2005. She remains one of the most prominent Palestinian figures in Lebanon.