



Stories of Feminisms in Lebanon

WHERE TO, MARIE?'

WHERE TO, MARIE?

STORIES OF FEMINISMS IN LEBANON

SCRIPT: BERNADETTE DAOU & YAZAN AL-SAAD I

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: LINA MOUNZER

ART:

RAZAN WEHBI (THE MEETING & THE FLOOD)

RAWAND ISSA (MARIE'S STORY)

TRACY CHAHWAN (NIDAL'S STORY)

JOAN BAZ (HAIFA'S STORY)

SIRENE MOUKHEIBER (NOORA'S STORY)

BOOK DESIGN: RAWAND ISSA

WEB DEVELOPMENT: LAYAL KHATIB

PREFACE:

A repeated—and ironic—accusation leveled at feminist movements in Arab countries in general and Lebanon in particular is that they are vectors of westernization. In actual fact, the region's feminist movements were born and developed in the context of nationalist and communist movements and as part of the struggles for national liberation. Feminism was not a foreign ideology 'imposed' by colonialism, but was instead indigenous to our societies. Women have long been struggling against colonial powers for equality and social justice, as well as against sectarian personal status laws and the entire patriarchal social structure that enforces them.

Feminism(s) in Lebanon have always been under harsh scrutiny, taking a backseat to "priorities" set by other movements. While women have actively taken part in nationalist and anti-capitalist struggles, from national independence to resisting Israeli occupation, and have played integral roles in class struggles as part of workers' and students' movements, their male comrades have tended to appropriate their struggles, alienating and pushing against their feminist agendas under the pretext that "women's issues" are not revolutionary priorities.

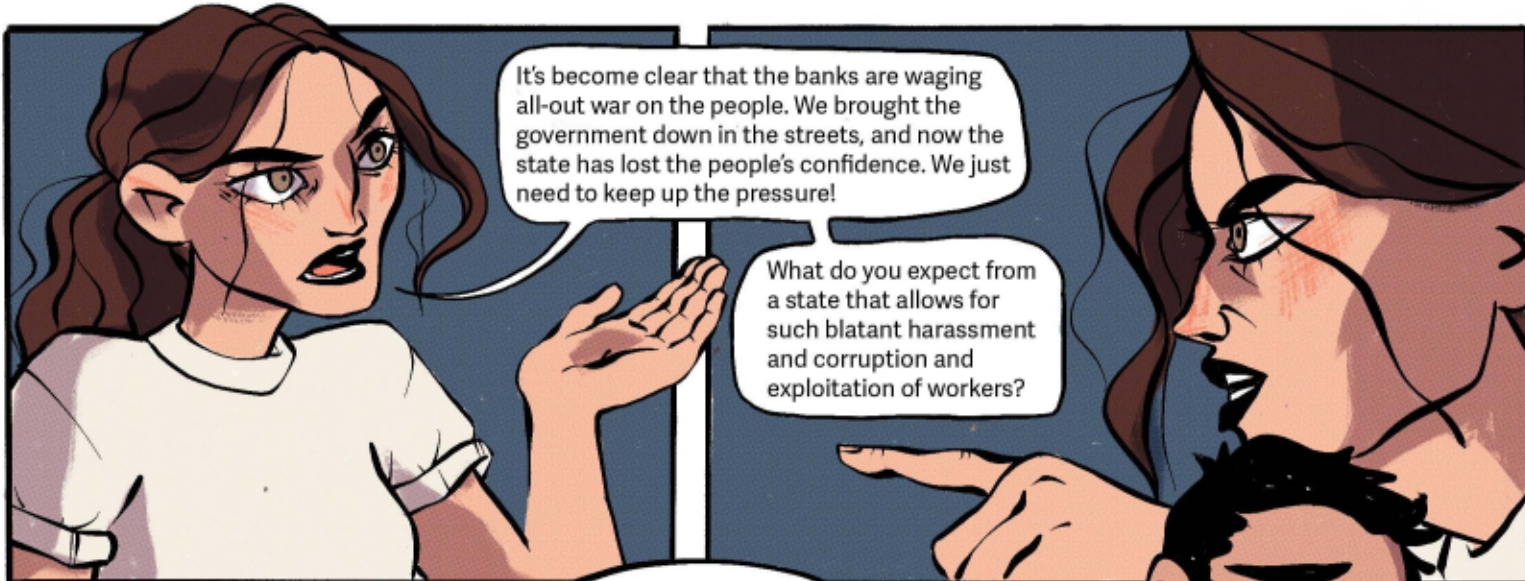
This comic book seeks to showcase why and from where these feminist movements in Lebanon emerged and how they have grown over the course of the century. Certainly, a truly complete and comprehensive history of these movements is beyond the scope of these pages. This is why we opted to tell the story of over a century of feminist activism through four fictional personal narratives. These are all based on extensive research carried out between 2010 and 2015, which included semi-guided interviews with feminist actors of different generations. Other sources, such as archival photographs, films, books, and articles regarding feminism(s) and social movements in Lebanon also informed the art and text, as did the experiences lived and witnessed by the authors of this book.

Completed during a tumultuous period that included massive protests, an unprecedented—and continuing—economic collapse, a blast that shattered nearly half of Beirut, and a pandemic, the creation of this book was not without its many interruptions and challenges. Nevertheless, we hope that this colorful and sometimes dark work will spark curiosity and passion about a movement that is intrinsically tied to the wider and ongoing struggles in Lebanon, the region, and the world.

THE MEETING

If we attack the banks we give them an excuse to close!
The priority now is the formation of a rescue government
with exceptional powers to get us out of this crisis and
prosecute those responsible for corruption.





It's become clear that the banks are waging all-out war on the people. We brought the government down in the streets, and now the state has lost the people's confidence. We just need to keep up the pressure!

What do you expect from a state that allows for such blatant harassment and corruption and exploitation of workers?



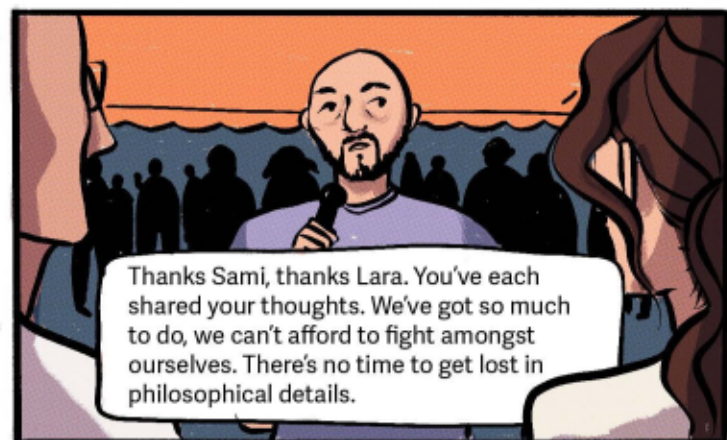
**HANG ON,
HANG ON!**

The system is fighting us at every level and we have to counter its every move! Confronting the system means confronting the banks and all the capitalist, racist, patriarchal poli—

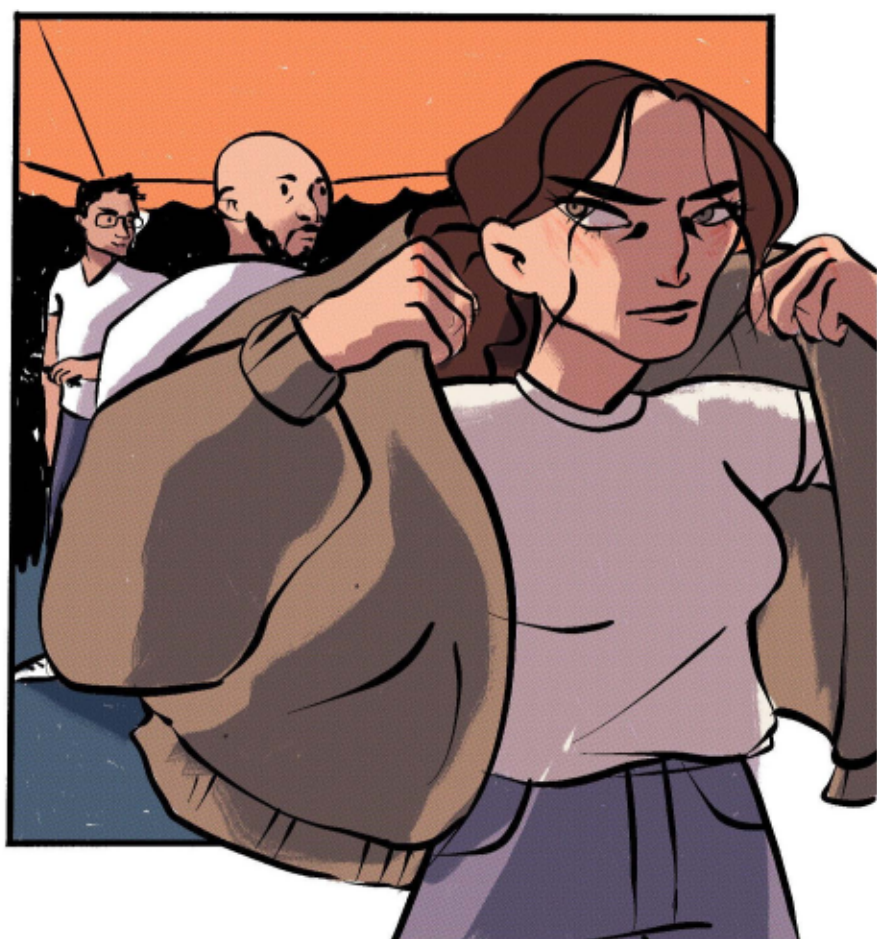
If we want a technocratic government, we can't bring down parliament as well! The economic situation is too devastated for this kind of radicalism! Or else we're just going to end up with a power vacuum.

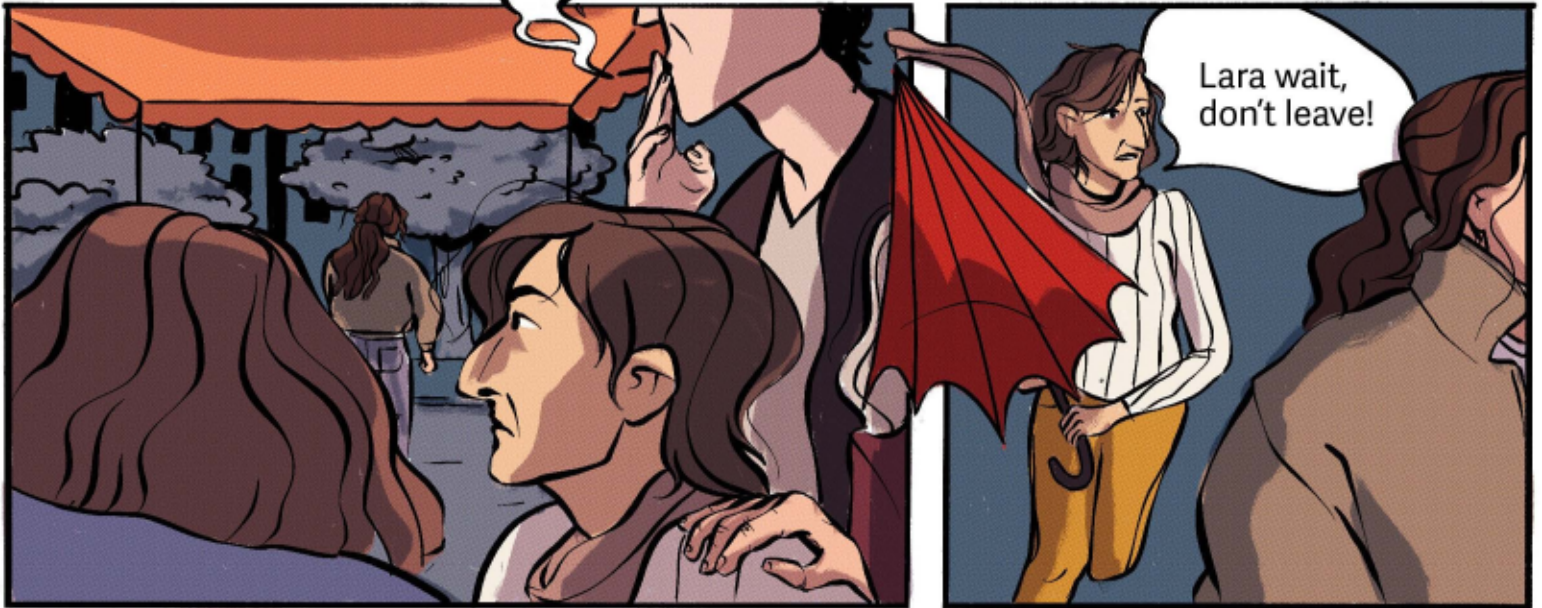


Please don't interrupt me! This kind of behavior is no longer—



Thanks Sami, thanks Lara. You've each shared your thoughts. We've got so much to do, we can't afford to fight amongst ourselves. There's no time to get lost in philosophical details.





Who else would like some tea?

No thanks, love. I've got a thermos of green tea, can't drink anything else.

If they don't have coffee I'll have nothing.

I saw you at all the demonstrations leading the charge with the loudspeaker.

Haha, yeah, it's a good way to release all my anger.

I'm too embarrassed to chant... I prefer to listen. It's like music to me.



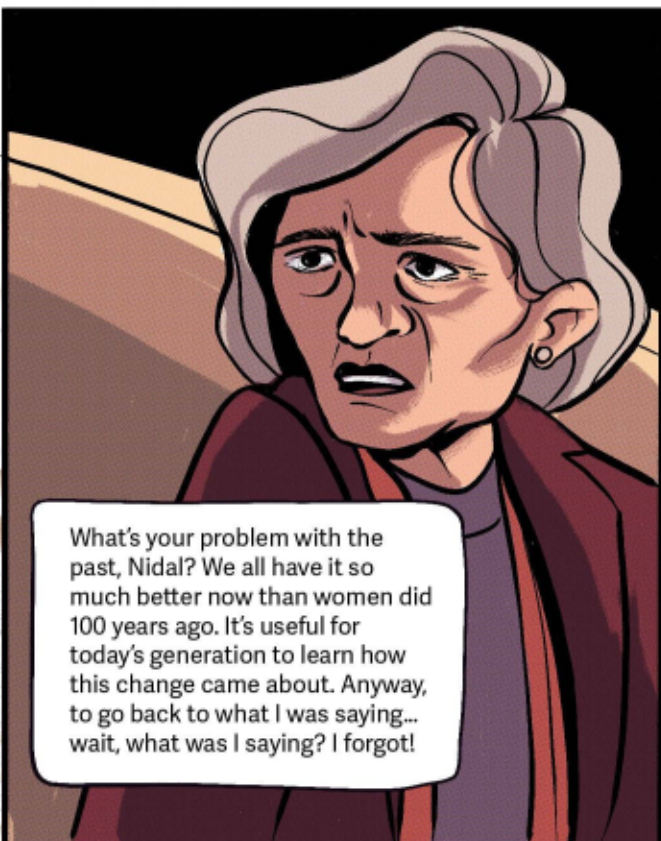
How are you feeling now? Meetings with men are always like that... exhausting!

It's been the same since the '70s. Maybe even earlier.

How'd you used to handle it?

We would confront them but they never took us seriously. It was always: **you** feminists are too sensitive! **You** take everything too personally!

In 2015, women were harassed and groped at the demonstrations. The men said we were exaggerating, making the protests look bad. They demanded proof!



When I hear protesters today chanting, "Where's the state?" I know just what they mean. But I also know these words mean something else under colonial occupation. When we had no institutions or law or even nation. I was born before Lebanon was born...

Marie's Story



...to a poor, large family living on the outskirts of Beirut. I had three brothers and two sisters. Both my parents worked at the tobacco factory, the Regie, and they could barely make ends meet. I attended the convent school near our home.



نحن خراباء في ديارنا



My childhood took place under the shadow of the French mandate, which had taken over after WWI. Parents were very fearful of their girls being harassed by French soldiers. When my parents were at work I'd play with the other kids in the neighborhood. That's how I came to see my first protest march.

Even though we were poor our door was always open and our house filled with people. My parents and their friends from the factory held all their union meetings at our house. When they came over I'd run to help my mother so I could eavesdrop on their exciting plans. The debates would sometimes get really heated, especially when they talked about the working conditions. I remember the smell of the coffee my father's friend spilled when he was arguing his point. Those meetings... they were like a nationalist awakening for me.



I understood injustice at an early age. My mother made less than my dad just because she was a woman.

I also knew my dad was poor and that's why we couldn't go to a good school.

Then my dad had a workplace accident. He got no compensation and he could no longer work.



My mom's salary wasn't enough. My big sister and I had to leave school and get jobs in a garment factory so we could help make ends meet.

I was so sad about leaving school. I'd been discovering new ideas, I had many friends...



I was 12, so this was one year before Independence. The factory became my school, and all its lessons were about injustice. We were all women working on the machines. There was one guy who maintained them. Once he missed a day because he was sick. The owner cut his salary. Workers weren't even allowed to fall ill! There was no labor law at the time, and no state to offer any protections.

The official story you know today about Independence leaves out all struggles of the poor and working class during the entirety of the mandate period.

I began joining my parents at the protests against the French, who ran the Regie.

الإضراب متشروع لتدقيقا
مطالب العمال



And then, independence was granted...



But the labor unions fought on. Warda Boutros was the first woman martyr to fall in the struggle for a Lebanese labor law. So many others were injured...



You might be surprised to know that women led the charge in union organizing and street protests in those days. And they were also always the first to pay the price. But their sacrifices led to the first victory for the working class. A labor law was finally passed a few months after the general strike.

Around this time, I met my husband and left my job. He was from a different sect. I married for love. But I ran into issues I hadn't anticipated.



Though we were both Christians, the priest refused to mark my sect down on the marriage certificate. He only put my husband's. The sectarian system doesn't see me as a person with a separate existence from my husband's.

But the biggest shock was denying women the right to vote in 1950. It felt so unfair: I'd been looking forward to vote for those who represented people like me.



They saw women as stupid and brainless. All our struggles – mine, my mother's, my sisters' – against French injustice, for fair and equal wages, just so we could end up without a voice?



The answer came one Sunday morning after mass. I was in the kitchen preparing lunch when there was a knock at the door.

Hi, I'm Wadad, from the League for women's rights. I'm collecting signatures on this petition to support women's suffrage. Can I have a minute of your time?

حقوق المرأة
أن تتسبب وتتسبب

We didn't even feel the time pass as we talked and talked. About so many things... I felt I'd known her forever. I opened up to her about everything. She told me about her work with the organization, what they did, and the campaign to amend the electoral law.

From that point on I decided to fight harder for women's rights.

Good Bye!

And that's exactly what I did. I helped collect signatures for the petition. I talked it up to whomever, wherever. I was relentless!

I talked to my friends from the factory. With my neighbors after Sunday mass. Even with my relatives! I'd invite them over for morning coffee so I could talk about the petition.

نريد الاعتراف بالمرأة اللبنانية



Once, my relative said to me: 'Women's rights' are my golden bangles, my driver and my housemaid. Hearing things like that only made me more determined.

We didn't stop with the petition. We increased pressure through street action. We planned for protests and coordinated with every women's organization across the country to consolidate our efforts.



It was an uphill battle the whole way. Fighting a hundred different social traditions. They were afraid that if women took part in politics it would upset the whole political calculus.

They said women weren't educated enough, that we didn't know how to make independent political decisions. We rejected this outright. Our movement represented educated and illiterate women and they had all participated fully in every effort...



There was a ton of pressure. But we didn't let up either.

We worked day and night. Organizing meetings, planning for "women's week," visiting every town, putting together events, all to invite women to sign our petition and to take part in the big demonstration in Beirut.

We had over 300 women show up. Beirut had never seen such a huge protest! Parliament had no choice but to listen to us. We handed them a list of our demands. It was one of the best moments of my life.

Women didn't just get voting rights, we could run for parliamentary seats as well. But the female candidates in 1953 and 1957 eventually had to pull out due to social and familial pressure.

It's important to remember that while we attained independence in 1943, it was only fully realized ten years later when Lebanese women finally actualized their dream of participating in national political decision-making.



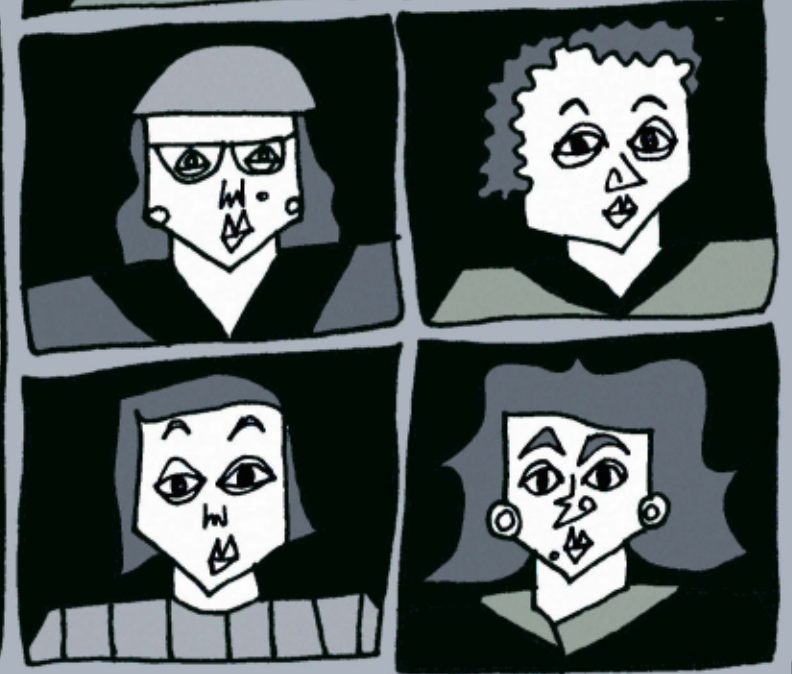
المراة اللبنانية تطلب حق الانتخاب
كتاب الاتحاد النسائي العربي الى الحكومة

اشترنا اس الى ان وفد الاتحاد النسائي العربي قابل حاضرة رئيس الدولة في السراي مطالبين بحق المرأة في الانتخاب ، واشترنا الى ما كان من جواب الرئيس له وقوله ان تقريره على هذا الحق يورد الى المجلس اللبناني . وقد ايد الوفد النسائي طلبة بمرسلة توصية طلب فيها تعديل قانون الانتخابات بتمديد حق المراة هذا الحق ، باعتبار انه مماثل للقوانين التي صدرت دون موافقة المجلس اللبناني ؛ وهذا هو نص الطلب :

مفكرة رئيس الدولة ، رئيس الحكومة

سرايم جديدة نفذت حالياً ، كقانون الانتخاب وقانون دوائر المستعدين والمجال وسواها . ولا كانت المرأة تشر بانها تقوم بواجبها نحو بلادها ، فتدفع الضرائب والمكوس ، اسوة بالرجال ، كما انها تعرف انفسها لان تساوي الرجل في العمل بجل الوطن ، لذلك رأيت انه قد آن لنا ان نساو به في هذا الحق الذي هو لنا ، فادامت توعدى الواجب المفروض علينا .

فنحن كعضيدات تفكرات نطلب من فضلكم ان يدرأوا قانون الانتخاب





National unity is the first big myth here—the first sectarian civil war broke out in 1958! And it happened because of an accumulation of economic, political, and sectarian problems...



The government had one tactic: suppress all dissent. The student and union movements were organizing bigger and bigger protests while the women's movement stood on the sidelines.



It's true, the sectarian system stood in our way. But Israel also never allowed us to enjoy full sovereignty. And there was always foreign interference in national affairs.



What were any of the Arab regimes able to do in the face of Israel? Ha!



We lost the 1967 war: The Naksa... it was a devastating defeat.



War and violence are never the answer. To build a democratic state, one that protects human rights... this is how we create a society strong enough to stand up to Israel.

Ha, so if an occupation soldier attacks me I can defend myself by tossing the Convention on the Rights of the Child in his face?



Wait, I'm lost. Why are we suddenly talking about resisting Israel?



The defeat against Israel was emblematic of the failure of our governments and societies and even our political movements. The Naksa was the bitter reality that destroyed all our dreams in one go.



Sounds like it's time for you to tell us your story, Nidal. I think we'd all like to hear it.



Hmm... ok. I'll tell you my story, maybe we can all learn from my generation's mistakes. Problem is, I have no idea where to even begin!



I'VE ALWAYS FELT LIKE I WAS BORN UNDER A BLACK CLOUD.



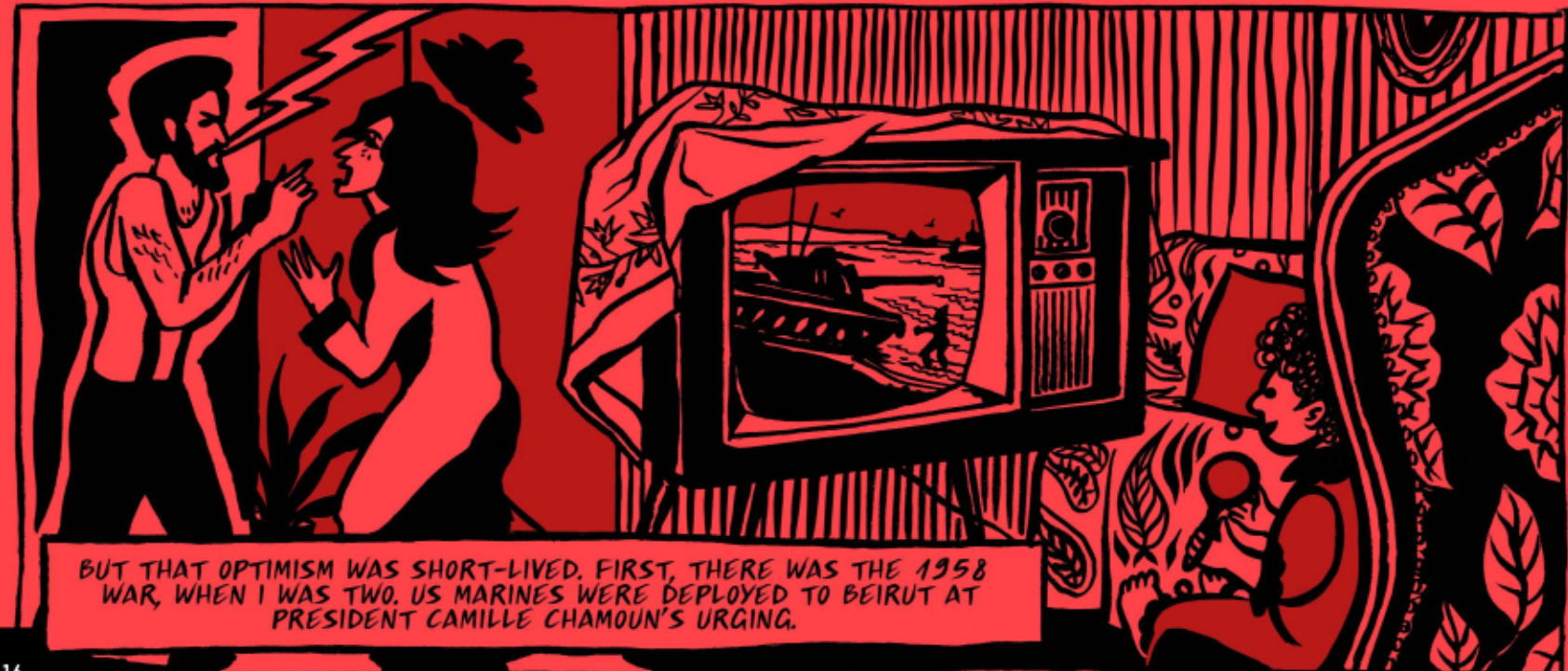
BAD LUCK CAME INTO THE WORLD WITH ME. WITH MY OWN EYES I SAW ALL THOSE ROSE-COLORED DREAMS OF MARIE'S TURN INTO NIGHTMARES.

Nidal's Story

I WAS BORN THE YEAR OF THE SUEZ WAR. MY PARENTS, LIKE MANY IN THOSE DAYS, LOVED NASSER...



HISTORY IS BEING MADE ANEW! WITH THE ASWAN DAM WE'LL TAKE BACK ALL THE RIGHTS THAT WERE DENIED TO US...



BUT THAT OPTIMISM WAS SHORT-LIVED. FIRST, THERE WAS THE 1958 WAR, WHEN I WAS TWO. US MARINES WERE DEPLOYED TO BEIRUT AT PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN'S URGING.

THE QUESTION OF HOW TO DEAL WITH ISRAEL DIVIDED THE COUNTRY ALONG SECTARIAN AND POLITICAL LINES, AND THIS REACHED INTO THE DIFFERENT WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS, DIVIDING THEM TOO.



*PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANIZATION IS FORMED

IT SHATTERED NOT ONLY THE MYTH OF NATIONAL UNITY, BUT ALSO THE IDEA THAT LEBANON WAS "THE SWITZERLAND OF THE EAST". THERE WAS AN ECONOMIC CRISIS, RAMPANT POVERTY, ILLITERACY, AND UNEQUAL DEVELOPMENT.



INTRA BANK COLLAPSES AND DEPOSITORS LOSE EVERYTHING...

ON TOP OF ALL THESE CRISES, THERE WAS THE 1967 DEFEAT AGAINST ISRAEL. ALL THOSE SACRIFICES THE ARAB PEOPLES MADE TO SUPPORT THE WAR EFFORT, FOR NOTHING!



THE USS LIBERTY APPROACHES THE EGYPTIAN COAST!

AT HOME THINGS KEPT GETTING HARDER AND HARDER. MY PARENTS' RELATIONSHIP DETERIORATED. I FELT THIS RAGE BUILDING IN ME, A NEED TO REVOLT AGAINST INJUSTICE, LIKE SO MANY KIDS OF MY GENERATION...



THE CAIRO ACCORDS HAVE BEEN SIGNED.

BACK THEN, THE STUDENT MOVEMENT WAS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH, AND WE DEMANDED IMPROVED PUBLIC EDUCATION. THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE WAS CENTRAL TO EVERY STRUGGLE.



BEIRUT SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS HAD ELECTED SCHOOL COUNCILS THAT MET ONCE EVERY MONTH OR TWO TO SET AN AGENDA. WHEN THEY CALLED FOR A DEMONSTRATION, HUNDREDS SHOWED UP!

I ATTENDED PROTESTS IN SECRET. MY PARENTS WERE VERY CONSERVATIVE AND DIDN'T THINK SUCH ACTIVITIES SUITABLE FOR A GIRL.

THAT'S HOW I BEGAN TO RUN WITH THE LEFTISTS AT SCHOOL. I STARTED TAKING PART IN READING GROUPS WITH THEM.



THERE WAS HIGH TENSION BETWEEN THE AUTHORITIES WHO WERE IMPOVERISHING EVERYONE AND THE RAGE BOILING OVER IN THE STREETS. REMEMBER THE GANDOUR FACTORY STRIKES, MARIE? THAT'S WHEN WE FIRST MET.

*A UNITED WORKING CLASS IS A MUST FOR MEETING DEMANDS

YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FIRECRACKER, NIDAL. I REMEMBER YOUR PASSION WAS INFECTIOUS AND YOU WERE READY TO REVOLT AGAINST EVERYTHING, ESPECIALLY "OUR GENERATION."



I REJECTED THE ROLE THAT SOCIETY EXPECTED OF ME. I WAS ALWAYS SMARTER THAN ALL MY MALE CLASSMATES.



WHEN I FIRST GOT TO UNIVERSITY I DIDN'T CARE ABOUT CLASS. I JUST WANTED TO MEET MY FRIENDS AND EXCHANGE POLITICAL BOOKS AND IDEAS.



WE WANTED TO CHANGE EVERYTHING... EVEN THE WAY PEOPLE THOUGHT.

WHEN THE GANDOUR FACTORY WORKERS WENT ON STRIKE WE WERE THERE ON THE GROUND WITH THEM, OFFERING SUPPORT.



THE AUTHORITIES CRACKED DOWN VICIOUSLY ON THE PROTESTS. YOUSSEF AL-ATTAR AND FATMEH AL-KHAWAJA WERE BOTH KILLED.



WE WEREN'T INTERESTED IN CHANGING A LAW HERE OR IN SMALL REFORMS THERE. WE WANTED TO CHANGE THE ENTIRE SYSTEM! NOT JUST THE POLITICAL SYSTEM, BUT THE FAMILY, SOCIETY, TRADITION. WE WANTED THE WORLD TO LOOK MORE LIKE THE LIVES WE LED FOR OURSELVES.

BUT OUR ENTHUSIASM GOT US INTO TROUBLE. FIRST WITH OUR MALE COMRADES IN THE PARTY.



WHILE THE PARTY AT FIRST ENCOURAGED US TO FORM A WOMEN'S COMMITTEE, THEY DIDN'T WANT US TO FOLLOW A FEMINIST AGENDA. THEY SENT A GUY OVER FROM THE POLITICAL BUREAU TO KEEP AN EYE ON US AND ATTEND OUR MEETINGS, CAN YOU IMAGINE?!

THEY WERE AFRAID WE'D GO OFF AND DO OUR OWN THING. THEY RATIONALIZED TRYING TO CONTROL US, SAYING THAT BECAUSE WE WERE IN A CONSERVATIVE SOCIETY WE SHOULDN'T BE TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL AND SOCIAL LIBERATION OF WOMEN.



WE READ GLOBAL FEMINIST LITERATURE...



WE WERE REALLY LOUD ABOUT SOME THINGS. THE MEN WOULD ASK: "HOW COULD YOU EVEN ACCEPT HAVING YOUR HUSBAND HELP WITH THE HOUSEWORK?" AND THE SHOUTING MATCHES WOULD BEGIN.



BUT WE NEVER LEFT THE PARTY. WE KEPT UP OUR WORK ON THE GROUND. LIVING CONDITIONS WERE TOUGH AND IN SUCH SITUATIONS WOMEN'S RIGHTS ALWAYS TAKE A BACKSEAT.





THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR DIDN'T COME OUT OF NOWHERE. THERE WERE ALL THESE PRECURSORS, THEY'D BEEN PREPARING FOR IT FOR A WHILE. ALL THE PARTIES BELIEVED THAT WAR WAS THE ONLY WAY TO CHANGE THINGS. BUT WE LOST PEOPLE TO THE WAR, AND IT AFFECTED THE PARTY'S PRESENCE AND WORK IN CERTAIN AREAS. SO WE DECIDED TO START A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION INDEPENDENT FROM THE PARTY.

WE FOCUSED ON DISPLACED PEOPLE, ON PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR WOMEN, ON ERADICATING ILLITERACY AND MAKING WOMEN AWARE OF THE LABOR LAWS AND OF THEIR OWN RIGHTS.



IN 1978 THERE WAS THE FIRST ISRAELI INVASION AND PEOPLE NEEDED MORE HELP THAN EVER.

SO I DECIDED TO AID IN THE MILITARY EFFORTS. I STARTED WORKING ON THE WIRELESS RADIO, COMMUNICATING WITH THE RESISTANCE, EVEN THOUGH WOMEN WEREN'T EXACTLY WELCOME ON THE FRONTLINES.



I MET MY HUSBAND WORKING ON THE WIRELESS. WE'D STRIKE UP CONVERSATIONS... I FELL IN LOVE WITH HIM BEFORE MEETING HIM. HE WAS DIFFERENT THAN THE OTHER MALE COMRADES WHO TALKED A BIG GAME ABOUT RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS BUT WERE SUPER CONSERVATIVE IN PRIVATE.



HE WAS DRUZE AND I'M SHIA. OUR PARENTS DISAPPROVED, BUT WE DIDN'T EVEN ASK FOR THEIR BLESSING. WE JUST FOUND A SHEIKH WHO WAS WILLING TO MARRY US. I HADN'T FELT SUCH JOY IN A LONG TIME. BUT WE'D BARELY WED BEFORE THE 1982 ISRAELI INVASION BEGAN...

THEN, THE SIEGE OF BEIRUT... THE MASSACRES...
MORE PEOPLE DISPLACED



BUT BEIRUT'S RESISTANCE ALSO FOUND NEW LIFE...



*88 DAYS OF STEADFASTNESS TESTIFY TO ISRAEL'S IMMINENT DEFEAT

*WE WILL RESIST

I SAID
GOODBYE
TO SO
MANY
FRIENDS
IN THAT
PERIOD,
ALL OF
THEM
FLEEING
THE SIEGE
OF BEIRUT,
THE WAR
IN LEBANON.



WHEN THE
MASSACRES
BECAME
MORE
DEPRAVED,
ESPECIALLY
THOSE
PERPE-
TRATED BY
SO-CALLED
"NATIONA-
LIST"
PARTIES,
I STARTED
DOUBTING
THIS WHOLE
THING I'D
SIGNED
UP FOR.



WE HAD
DREAMS AND
RIGHTEOUS
CAUSES BUT
I NEVER
THOUGHT
WE'D STOOP
TO SUCH
LEVELS OF
UGLINESS.
I GREW
REPULSED
BY ALL THE
MILITIAS...



WHY DID YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND?



MAYBE I WAS HAVING AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS. BUT WHEN I REALIZED I DIDN'T EVEN WANT TO BRING CHILDREN INTO SUCH A LIFE, I UNDERSTOOD THAT WAR IS COMPLETE ANATHEMA TO MOTHERHOOD, AND I EMBRACED FEMINISM MORE AND MORE.



YOU KNOW YOU CAN BE A FEMINIST WITHOUT BEING MATERNAL!



OF COURSE... SO THE VIOLENCE INCREASED, AND OUR CENTERS WERE ATTACKED BY ALL THE MILITIAS. THE RISE OF THE ISLAMIST PARTIES HURT OUR WORK ON THE GROUND MOST. SOCIETY GREW MORE CONSERVATIVE, AND THE LIRA FELL AND THE ECONOMY COLLAPSED... AND SECTARIANISM INCREASED ITS STRANGLEHOLD ON THE ENTIRE SOCIETY.



WE STARTED ORGANIZING PROTESTS AGAINST THE WAR, BUT OUR MOVEMENT WAS WEAKER THAN THE POWER OF THE MILITIAS.



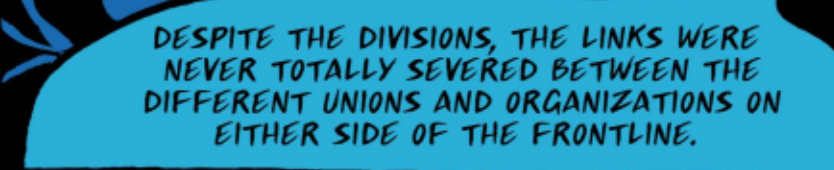
I REMEMBER THE PROTEST AT THE MUSEUM! I WAS AT UNIVERSITY THEN, AND THE MUSEUM WAS A FRONTLINE, BUT IT WAS SO POWERFUL HOW EVERYONE CAME TOGETHER... PEOPLE WERE CRYING!




IMAGINE, PEOPLE WHO'D BEEN COLLEAGUES OR FRIENDS, SEPARATED FOR SO LONG BY THE WAR!



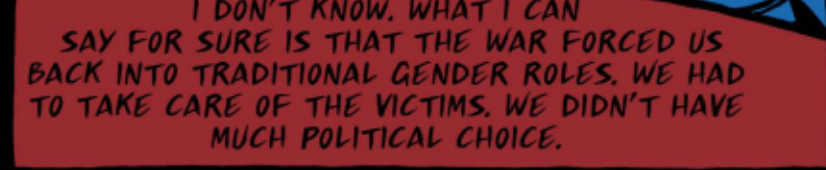
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "FRIENDS" WHEN YOU WERE KILLING ONE ANOTHER?




DESPITE THE DIVISIONS, THE LINKS WERE NEVER TOTALLY SEVERED BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT UNIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE FRONTLINE.



YOU THINK IF THE WAR HADN'T HAPPENED THINGS WOULD BE BETTER FOR WOMEN TODAY?



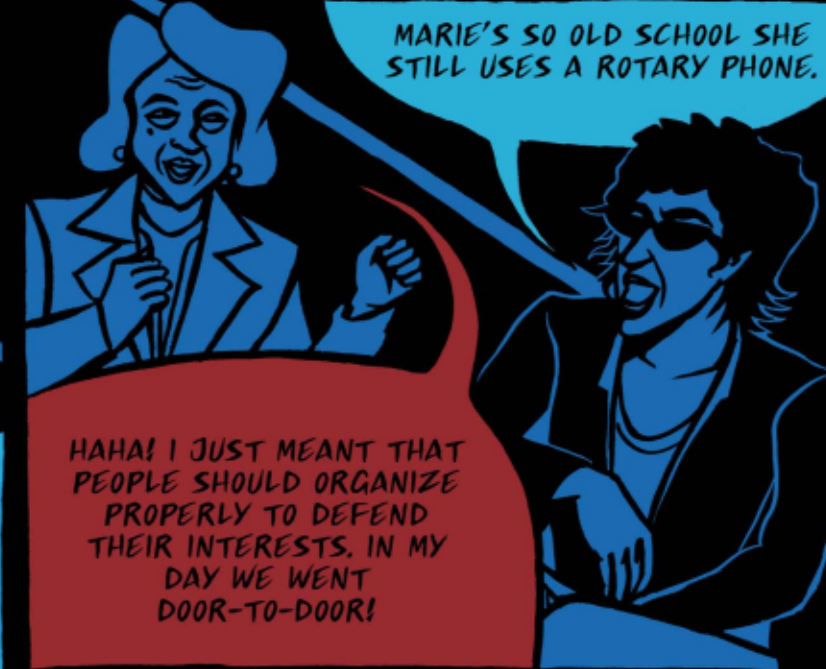
I DON'T KNOW. WHAT I CAN SAY FOR SURE IS THAT THE WAR FORCED US BACK INTO TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES. WE HAD TO TAKE CARE OF THE VICTIMS. WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH POLITICAL CHOICE.



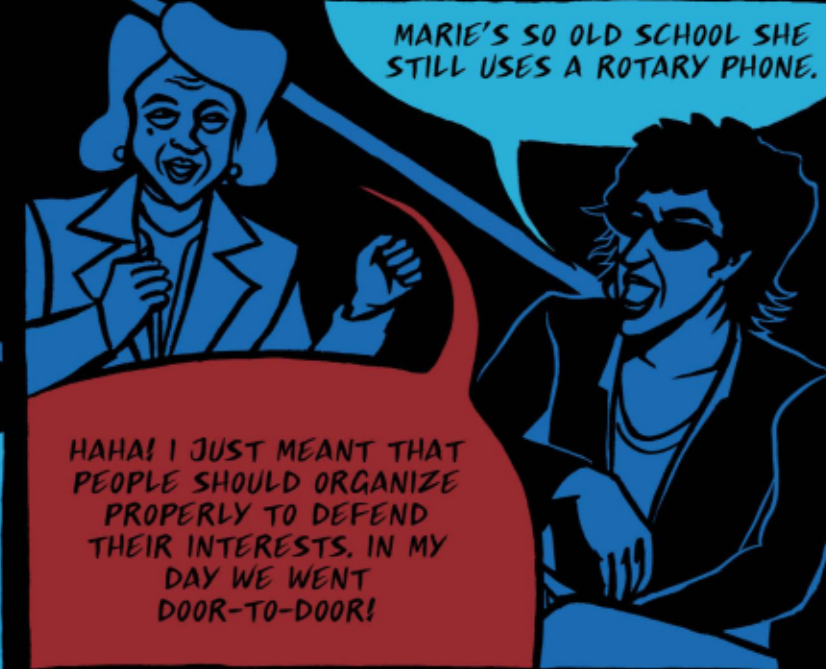
SO, YOU THINK THERE MIGHT BE ANOTHER WAR?




PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO DEFEND THEMSELVES IN ANY WAY THEY SEE FIT... BUT WE ALSO CAN'T CHANGE ANYTHING IF PEOPLE DON'T ORGANIZE. YOU CAN'T JUST STAY GLUED TO THE FACEBOOK AND INTERNET.



MARIE'S SO OLD SCHOOL SHE STILL USES A ROTARY PHONE.



HAHA! I JUST MEANT THAT PEOPLE SHOULD ORGANIZE PROPERLY TO DEFEND THEIR INTERESTS. IN MY DAY WE WENT DOOR-TO-DOOR!



MAYBE THAT'S ENOUGH TALKING DOWN TO THE YOUNGER GENERATION? IT'S THEIR TURN NOW TO CHANGE THINGS. YOU HAVE TO LET THEM DEFINE THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES.



NO, ACTUALLY WE NEED TO LEARN FROM ALL OF YOU! WHY DON'T YOU TELL US YOUR STORY, HAIFA?



HMM...OK! I'VE HAD A PASSION FOR HELPING THE LESS FORTUNATE SINCE I WAS A CHILD, THANKS TO MY PARENTS, WHO RAISED ME WITH THESE VALUES...

My parents were quite liberal. I never felt like my dad was controlling, either with me or my mom.

I was born in Beirut, a few years before the civil war. My brother and I had an idyllic childhood. My dad was a journalist and my mom was from a prominent family.



When war broke out, my mom was desperate to leave but my father refused. Two years in, it had become difficult just to carry on with our daily lives. Moving around was harder, everything was expensive, there was regular shelling, massacres, mass displacement. My father was forced to give in.



Haifa's Story

We fled to Cyprus. We spent nearly the entire war there. My father kept his job with the paper. Every Sunday my brother and I were expected to read it. He thought it was important that we keep up with the news from home, that we preserve our language and culture.



My brother and I loved living in Cyprus. We had many friends. We spent all our vacations on the beach. But my parents, especially my dad, weren't happy. They were always just waiting for the minute we'd be able to go back to Beirut.

Toward the end of the war things had calmed down at home and my parents decided we were going back. I'd just graduated high school.



In Beirut, I enrolled at St. Joseph University.

I majored in social work. I made new friends quickly, and they helped me adjust to my new life. We knew the war would end any minute, and we were waiting for the country to change, to become better than it had ever been.



Through my studies I got to know a lot of NGOs. I liked the new ideas they were spreading, about democracy, and international conventions on human rights. I decided to volunteer.

The last two years of the war were really hard, but there was also a lot of local and international pressure to end the fighting, as well as pledges from foreign countries to help finance the rebuilding of the country.



I graduated just after the war ended. Like everyone else, I was optimistic about rebuilding everything, about living in our new peace.

I was so excited about social work. I felt like a real participant in building our new post-war society.



There was urgent work required at every level. Civil society was instrumental in helping the state back onto its feet again. The choice was either the militias or the state. And we knew only the state could maintain peace and protect us from the sectarian parties.



I got my job at a local NGO through my dad. I was head of the women's program. We had Arab allies and international partners.



They introduced us to new values: democracy, human rights, peace building, women's rights.... And they also gave us new tools to organize our work. I had no idea how we'd be able to apply international treaties in Lebanon.



We didn't know that violence against women was a social problem. Always hidden in the family. Always taboo.

Like everyone else, I thought each instance was an individual case.



We were working on many fronts. Preparing for the Beijing Conference, the Fourth World Conference on Women.



Before that though, we founded the “Arab Women’s Court”, a coordinated effort with organizations across the Arab world. That’s what readied us for Beijing. Otherwise, we had no proof even of the existence of domestic violence!



We organized listening sessions with women from the entire Arab world, about their experience with violence. They were so moving. We learned that domestic violence was widespread across all our societies. Rooted in tradition and culture and religion and even law.



The women’s court not only exposed these crimes, it also laid the foundation for a new sort of struggle to change policies and laws. The UN’s support was fundamental, and we also had the help of women experts who’d been studying these issues for years.



The state was cooperating directly with women’s organizations. Our official Lebanese delegation was headed by the first lady, and we all travelled together to Beijing.

The Beijing conference was a historical moment. It gave the women's rights agenda legal recognition, independent of the political parties! No, it wasn't local recognition, but it gave us a framework within which to work for real legislative change.



UNITED NATIONS
FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN
—BEIJING 4-15 SEPTEMBER 1995

Noora: But even though our government signed the CEDAW agreement, they had reservations. They wouldn't commit to anything to do with personal status laws.

You're right, this became a major conflict after Beijing. Cooperation between state and civil society broke down. Issues came to a head with the campaign for civil marriage. The state was afraid it would provoke sectarian feeling and threaten peace.

Noora: Since then, they've been deaf to all our demands. Maybe we should cancel the headache of the marriage institution altogether!

If you try to change things like this of course they'll stand in your way!

Noora: But they're always standing in our way regardless!

The state was afraid it would provoke sectarian feeling and threaten civil peace.



We learned that when you demand grassroots change, everything devolves into chaos. We decided to use diplomacy. Instead of advocating for civil marriage we approached the issue indirectly through fighting domestic violence.



And that's how we founded the first alliance in Lebanon to abolish violence against women.



At first it was all volunteer work. Later, we became salaried employees. But working conditions weren't fair, with the excuse that, "You're activists, not bank employees"!



This was all the state's job. But since it wasn't doing the work, we couldn't just leave women to fend for themselves. We weren't only offering services, we also worked on implementing a law.



We faced pushback, not just from the state. Competition over securing funding also created conflict and prevented all the organizations from working together on a single united agenda.



Though we didn't manage to achieve widespread legal reforms, we built a lot of social awareness. Today, even ordinary people discuss these issues.



Many organizations secured important wins, like maternity leaves and allowing married women to practice trade business.

The most important achievement was criminalizing all honor killings. These reforms wouldn't have happened without women campaigning and courageously exposing such crimes.



Noora: *Certainly, these are important laws. But it didn't stop the violence. Women are still being killed today!*

Abolishing Reduced Sentences for Honor Crimes

Women's Organizations Welcome New Reform And Express Shock at Objections of Some

Yes, we had to do this because there is no state. That's why we're still working to change the laws. And to keep offering support services to women.

Stop distorting the law to protect women from domestic violence.

Rape is a crime, no matter who commits it.

Noora: The state never offers any concession without distorting it somehow. Like giving us a law to protect women from domestic violence but excluding marital rape.

العنف بالبيت
لازم يوقف.
#حجرمنحجز
81788178

العنف بالبيت
لازم يوقف.
#حجرمنحجز
81788178

STOP VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN
CALL ABAND
81788178

DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE
IS A
DEADLY
VIRUS.
81788178

You are
NOT alone!
#lockDownNot
lockUP
81788178

حجر مني
حجز
نحن هزك

خلص للعنف
بالبيت
لحجر مني حجز

It was so hard getting that law voted in! Yes, we lost some of its articles, but it was still a huge win for all women.

Noora: I remember the objections when Setrida Geagea showed up at the Sanayeh protest. People didn't want political parties like the Future Movement to get involved...

But we needed the support of the parliamentary blocs to get our laws past parliament.

And we worked nonstop every day to secure reforms.

Yes, there is still so much more to do, especially with people like you, Noora. But we can barely keep up. Sometimes I can hardly breathe I'm so constricted by deadlines.

يقط
ال Deadlines!



And despite how much work we're doing and how tired we are, we can barely extend support services to all the people that need them.

Ha! I can't believe I'm agreeing with Haifa!

Services should be available in every village, town, and area in Lebanon. It's impossible for a handful of NGOs to do all that!

There's always opportunity for change! But we need alternatives!

I think all of us now should concentrate our efforts on the revolution and work together on every issue, no exceptions!



Ha! Well, we definitely have differing opinions on many things but I support all your work and all feminist endeavors.

Noora, we'd love to hear your story and your perspective.

I thought we agreed on everything!



FINALLY, IT'S MY TURN!!

For the longest time I felt like we lesbians had no place in Lebanese feminism. But now you care and actually want to hear my story.

I'm not going to start with that biographical crap about where I was born because it's tedious. Let's just say the best parts of my childhood were also moments of great fear...

Well, I don't want to get into my civil war childhood. Funny how they call us the "Civil War Generation" when you all lived through it!

NOORA'S Story

My first taste of freedom was when the south was liberated from Israeli occupation and I got to visit my dad's village for the first time...

That was also the year Hafez al-Assad kicked the bucket... May he never rest easy.

The Second Intifada started that same year too. My friends and I wanted to hold a protest at school. There were a lot of solidarity protests in Beirut, I'd watch them from the balcony.

I followed the news closely... And by reading the newspaper I got to know all the people and political organizations active on the ground.

I was curious about their ideas, but never fully convinced. There was always something missing.

FREEDOM FOR PALESTINE

RIGHT OF RETURN

ACTIVIST SO-and-SO



The 9/11 attacks happened just as I was beginning university.

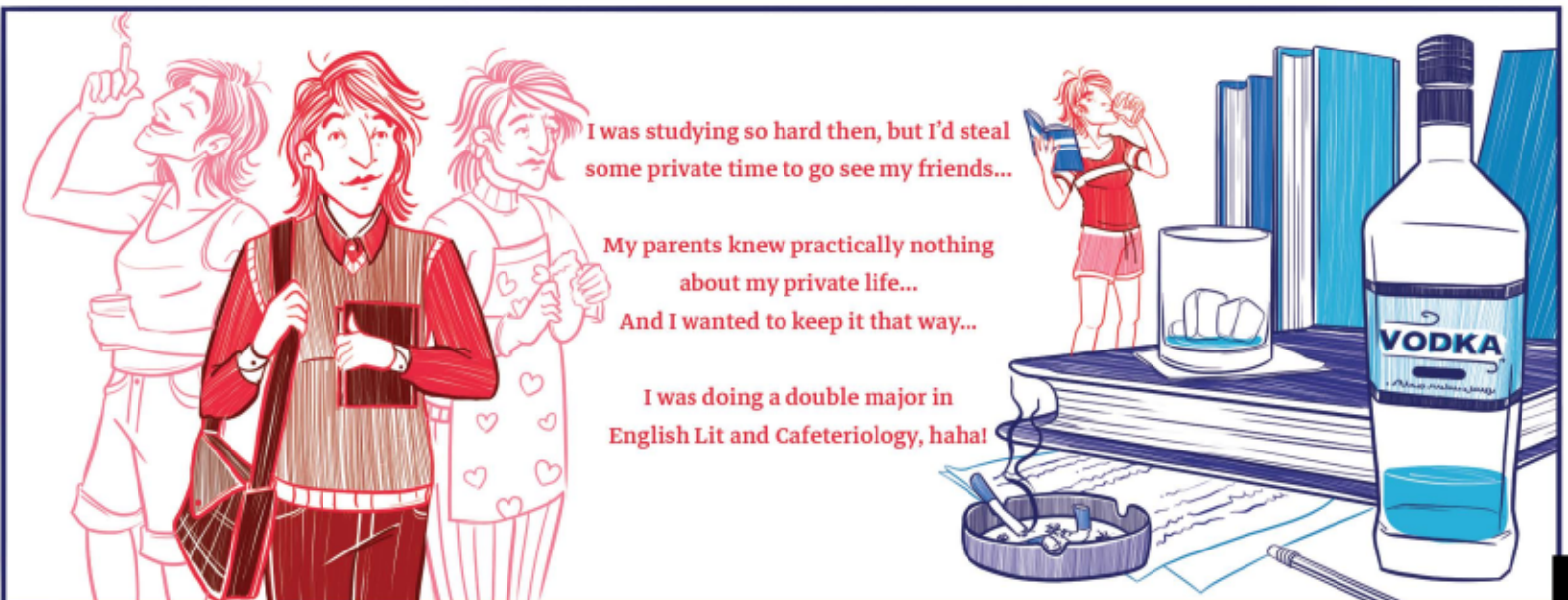
I watched the news footage at my friend's house. We thought we were inured to images of mass violence. But it was so strange to see it happening on US soil.



That night we went out to Hamra and got totally wasted.

We were drinking because we knew they were going to make us all pay. Which is exactly what happened...

There were massacres in Afghanistan and Iraq, and all Arabs and Muslims were branded as "terrorists" in their war on terror.



I was studying so hard then, but I'd steal some private time to go see my friends...

My parents knew practically nothing about my private life... And I wanted to keep it that way...

I was doing a double major in English Lit and Cafeteriology, haha!

University wasn't just the place where I was exposed to new ideas...
it was my excuse to get away from my parents. I used to lie to them so much!

OSAMA
BIN LADEN?

Made in
USA!

Sorry dad,
we were studying so
hard.

Our relationship is better now but at the time I resented them so much.
Even though they raised me on the principles of freedom and open
communication, and practically killed themselves so I could finish
university and become independent...

UNACCEPTABLE!

COMING HOME
AT DAWN!

YOU STINK
OF CIGARETTES AND ALCOHOL!

THIS IS SHAMEFUL
BEHAVIOR, NOORA.

All this would go out the window when the topic was
my body or my private life...

YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH NOW
TO KNOW BETTER!



We generally agreed on politics but they didn't see their control over my life as political.

Like we were in agreement against the war on Iraq. Which wasn't so common at the time. Imagine, many who supported the war back then are now supporters of the Iraqi revolution!

Our whole family went to the protest together.

That's when my dad saw the rainbow flag for the first time.



So the Druze are against the war too?



He had no idea what the flag meant, and I couldn't explain this wasn't the flag of the Druze sect... I left him to his innocence.



But I became so curious about meeting the people who'd raised that flag.



I waited until the very end of the protest. I was terrified someone would think I was "one of them".

But they were so nice to me. They could tell I was flustered so they didn't push anything...

Just told me they met regularly at Zico House and invited me to join.



I was torn between excitement that they existed out in the open at all and fear they'd be targeted by the police and arrested.



Homophobia was way worse back then...
No one knew anything about gay people.
Not even the feminist or revolutionary groups.



The government always goes after gay and trans people, humiliating them, blackmailing them...
This happened a lot, even with our friends.

But harassers and rapists and men who beat their wives are free to go about their business!



By the time dawn came I'd decided I wouldn't go to the meeting. But online I kept track of what they were up to.



SOUTAQIYYEH
DISCRIMINATION
SELF-ESTEEM
GENDER IDENTITY
ACTIVISM
COMING OUT

I preferred to be in a safe space so I could talk about my experience and learn from that of other women.



We need such a place to be able to build our movement. Especially that society is so violent and the feminist groups don't concern themselves with issues of sexual liberation.



You're right! If we had a strong feminist movement things would be different!

That's not fair! The movement represents ALL women.

We don't need to focus on sexual minorities.

Maybe the timing was wrong. The whole nation was under threat in 2005.

And there was the conflict between the March 14 and March 8 factions...

Things were really tense after Hariri's assassination. Of course we feared the outbreak of another war every time the warlords disagreed!

But there was political division within our community as well. As though we didn't live in enough conflict already!



We decided to start an independent group just for women. We began meeting in secret. We turned our back on politics and built our feminism on solidarity.



I'd never felt so free. I was surrounded by like-minded people who'd support me no matter what. It was a whole theoretical and political education and we didn't even know it!



We decided to learn how to organize from women who'd come before us. We read feminist literature from Europe and the US. But we were also fascinated by Black and anti-colonial feminisms.



We wrote articles and published them on websites and on social media. We wrote about our personal experiences: about life, patriarchy, desire, relationships, violence and love... We also started a group to fight racism and a center to support foreign workers...

We reached out to build alliances with feminist organizations. But we faced pushback for being so bold about sexual liberation.



But little by little we made headway, taking part in campaigns for nationality rights and against violence, harassment, and rape.

Are you serious?

We declared revolution against old political ideas. We needed no one's protection, we would protect each other. Our bodies belonged to us.



Our feminism was intersectional, against sectarianism, racism, the patriarchy and classism.

Like everyone living in this region, we had a desire to revolt against the status-quo. People living under oppression, violence, poverty, hunger and humiliation. And then the people revolted! From Tunisia to Yemen, Syria to Bahrain.

We couldn't believe what we were seeing!

We followed every development breathlessly, from TV to social media. We felt everything with the protesters: their fear, their joy, their tears!



We launched solidarity campaigns with all the uprisings. Every day we protested in front of a different embassy!
"Your turn is coming, Lebanon," we'd chant. And we'd look at the cops to see their reactions. Stone-faced.



Other groups called us to form an alliance:

"The people want to bring down the sectarian system."

Everyone was so excited and positive at first. Our first demonstration was held under the pouring rain.

But the divisions soon became clear. First, it was that we couldn't support the Syrian revolution because some groups were pro-Assad.



Then there was more conflict, over anti-racism and supporting foreign workers and refugees.



So what happened? You quit the campaign?

Yeah, we left because we didn't want to waste energy on something that didn't represent us.

We allied with other groups.



It's true, we didn't get the revolution we were dreaming of. But there were a lot of actions against the status quo. Worker's strikes at Spinneys and among the day laborers at EDL. Migrant domestic workers formed a trade union.



Maybe that's when the anger in the street began building.

طلعت ريحتكم
You Stink

It built until it exploded in 2015 over the garbage crisis. We never thought people would protest in such huge numbers! But 2011's problems followed us here too.



This time, the feminists refused to back down. We formed an alliance around feminist issues and have been organizing our own march every women's day since.

النظام الأيوبي قاتل
Patriarchy kills

It's the feminist revolution that's going to bring about change.

Enough with letting the men make all the decisions on their own!
From now on we do it for ourselves.

The revolution I dream of is one that belongs to everyone. Women, men, children, the elderly, refugees, immigrants... everyone taking part.

Yes, the system needs to fall but that's not enough for women's rights if people's ideas don't change too. It was courageous of the young women to speak openly about their bodies and sexualities and we need to protect and join them.

We need a framework for change. Early elections, a government of independents, or else we're doomed to chaos

OK, but sometimes I think, why can't we occupy the state? We can protect our lives and futures.

This is the first time we sit and discuss things so openly together. And all thanks to Lara!

Next time we'll go easy on stories of the past. Maybe we can all start imagining a better future together instead.

Like with all the election work we did in 2016 with Beirut Madi-

flood!
RUN!



THE FLOOD

Oh God, look at this, it's totally nuts! We need to do something!



This is proof that God's a man.



Come Lara, let's go help the others.



I'm coming with you.

Marie what will you do? How will you get home?



I wish I were about 50 years younger... I'd have come too... Let me know if you need anything.

Don't worry Marie, I'll drive you home... I just want to take a couple of photos... Look, this is the result of corruption... all the sewers overflowing, it's disgusting.

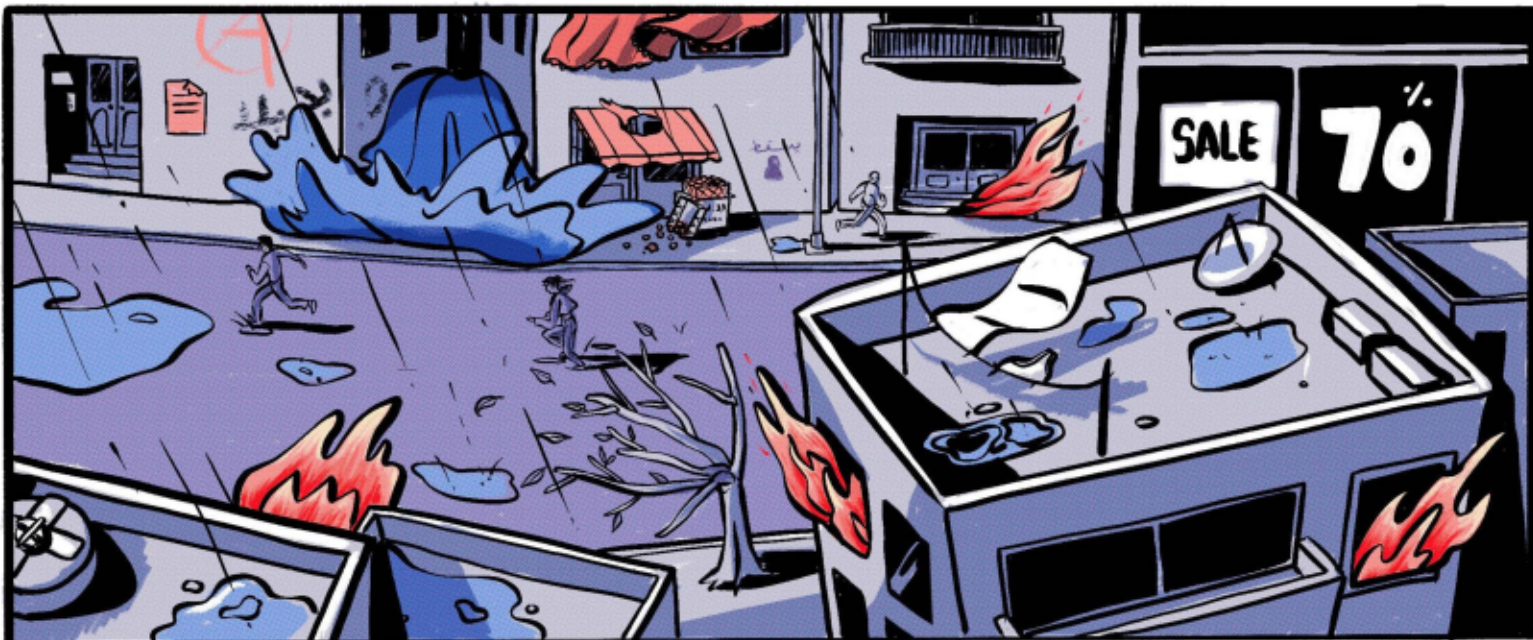


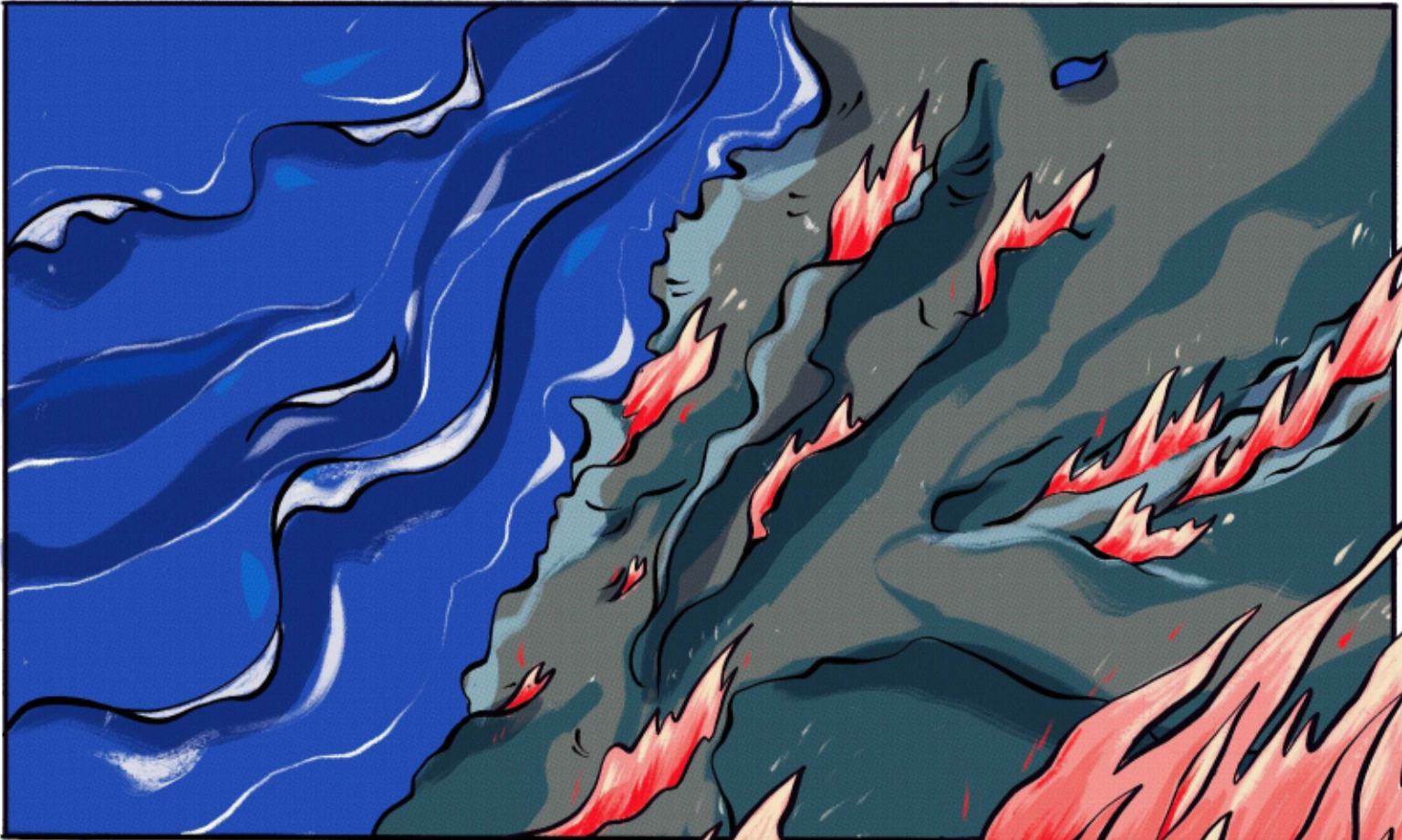
I know I just met you, but your stories affected me deeply. I want to hear more of them. I don't know when we might meet up again but...

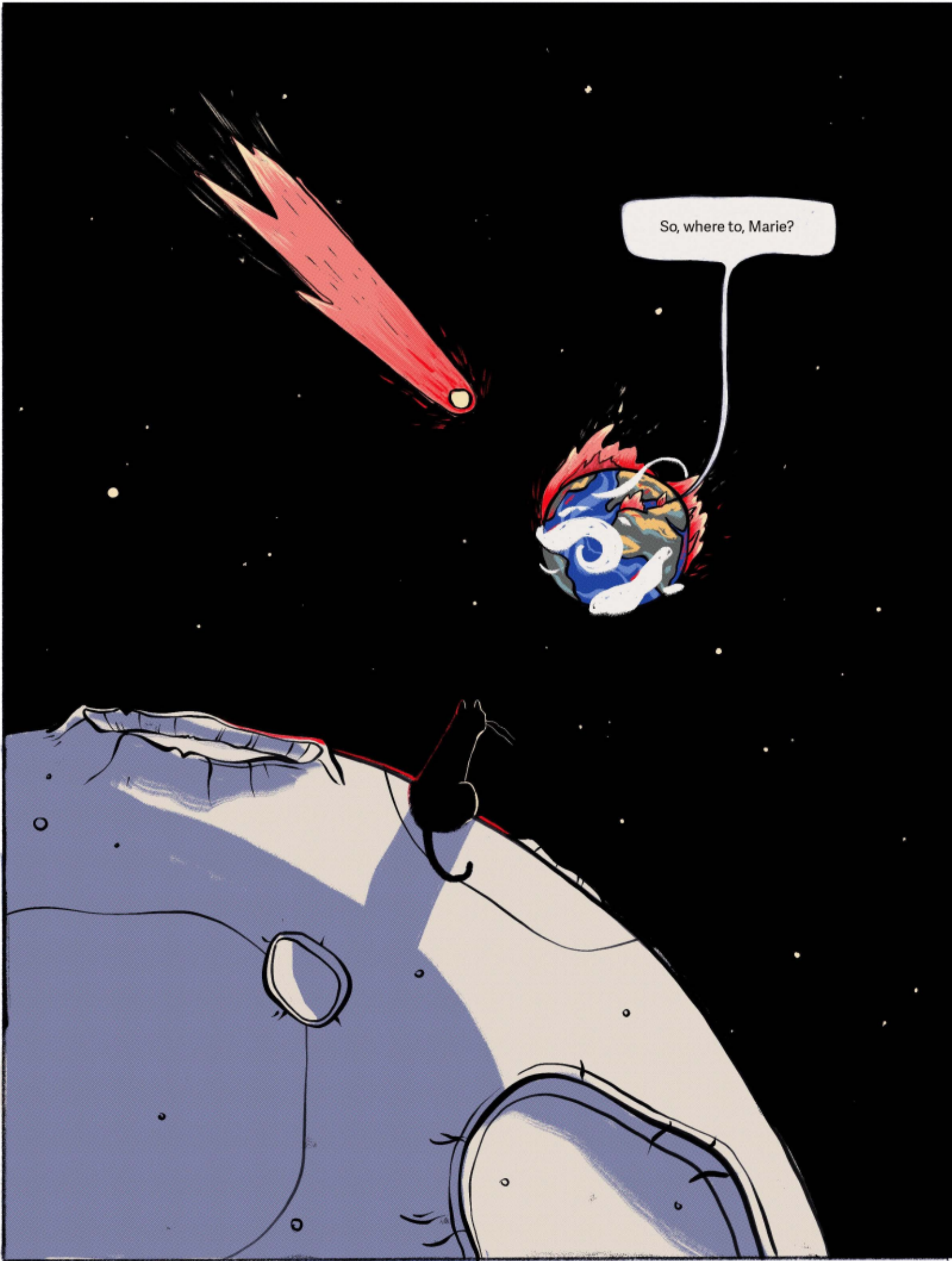
You can't get rid of us that easy! We still want to hear your story. Of course we'll all meet up again!

Yes but let's do it in a warm place next time, please! Far from heaven's wrath.









So, where to, Marie?

ENDNOTES:

The Meeting

Page 1: The vexing question of how to start a comic on feminism(s) in Lebanon was solved by reality. Soon after we began working on the script, an uprising erupted on October 17, 2019. While participating in various debates and actions related to the uprising, we noticed the clearly gendered power dynamics at play during demonstrations and meetings. How could we not start there?

Page 2, Panel 4: Sami's interruption is a routine form of aggression perpetrated by men during group discussions. There is much testimony, documentation, and research on this common behavior, and the ways in which it stifles women's ability to engage in and maintain debate.

Page 4: The courtyard our characters are walking in is that of the Azarieh Building, one of the many places in downtown Beirut that were occupied by protesters during the uprising.

Page 5, Panel 1: Haifa's comment is based on notions and approaches by some feminist organizations that saw the problem of patriarchy and men as a mental health/psychological issue.

Chapter 1: Marie's Story

There is an ongoing and divisive debate around the question of when feminism began in Lebanon. Most studies take the early nineteenth century as a starting point for the examination of social movements, and especially women's movements, in the Arab world. This is also true for Lebanon, which means that this history begins even before the country's formation as an independent state. For our part, we decided to start during the period of the French mandate after WWI, in which working class women and men played a crucial role in the fight for national independence against colonial domination. It should be noted that our story is rooted in personal narratives of Lebanese feminists. We opted to tell a personalized history of feminism(s) rather than adhering to a strict typography of the varying currents of feminism that have appeared in Lebanon over time, or providing a survey of their achievements.

Page 1, panel 3: Banner translates to "Strangers In Our Own Home".

Page 3, panel 1: Banner translates to "Labor Strikes Are Legitimate Tools To Fulfill The Workers' Demands".

Page 5, panel 3: Pamphlet translates to "Women Have the Right to Vote and Be Voted For".

Page 6, Panel 2: The Régie Company (or Régie Libanaise des Tabacs et Tombacs) was formed in 1935 during the height of French colonialism in Lebanon. It held a monopoly over tobacco production and was often associated with colonialism and labor exploitation.

Page 6, panel 3: Banner translates to "We Demand that Lebanese Women Be Recognized As Full Citizens Equal to Men" .

Page 8, panel 2: أبطال رواية الحرية... رجالات الاستقلال | النهار (annahar.com).

Page 8, Panel 3: Warda Boutros was the first woman martyr of the labor movement. She was shot dead by security forces on June 27, 1946 during a police crackdown to end workers' strikes against the Régie Company during the period following national independence. Her death not only serves as a testament to the leading role played by women in the labor movement, it helped further radicalize the cause. Her legacy still resonates today, particularly in the achievement of the first labor legislation in Lebanon in the direct aftermath of her killing.

Page 9, Panels 1-2: According to Lebanese law, women do not have personal civil status records. They are first registered under their fathers' records, then their husbands'. Moreover, and particularly during that time period, marriages across different religions or even across different sects within the same religion were often fraught with various tensions.

Page 9, Panel 3: The first electoral law, issued in 1950, discriminated against women and deprived them of their political rights. As such, the first feminist mobilizations were for women's political rights. The suffragettes' activism included a door-to-door campaign to collect signatures for a petition, demonstrations, and the organization of cross-regional coordination meetings.

Page 13, Panel 1: The recognition of full political rights was a major achievement for the women's movement. This victory—a direct result of women's mobilizations—led to the foundation of a union of women's organizations under the umbrella organization of the al-Majles al-Nissa' al-Lubnani (Lebanese Council of Women – LCW) in 1952.

Page 13, Panel 4: These feminist pioneers were generally far removed from the economic concerns of popular circles. Moreover, the LCW's political structure mirrored that of the country's institutionalized sectarianism, with its leadership positions alternating between Christians and Muslims. The feminist discourse of the first wave reveals overlap and confusion between a national "modern" identity and women's rights identity within the family, which also reflected the discourse of the political parties of the period, whether on the left or right of the political spectrum.

Page 13, Panel 4 : The newspaper page behind Nidal is that of Annahar, Issue #2705, and can be seen at this link: <https://womeninleadership.hivos.org/timeline/>

Page 14, Panel 1: The political and economic crisis led to a brief confessional armed confrontation in 1958.

Page 14, Panel 5: The "second wave" marked a transition from nationalist feminism to left-wing feminism, whereby the struggle for women's liberation became situated within the larger context of the various workers' and anti-colonial struggles across the world. Thus, it challenged the "class-blind" concerns of the existing feminist movement as well as within the ranks of the left as a whole.

The beginning of this second wave can be traced to the late 1960s, an era marked by the disillusionment caused by the Arab defeat against Israel in the 1967 war (known in Arabic as al-Naksa).

Chapter 2: Nidal's Story

Page 16, Panel 3: The speech emanating from the TV is that of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser declaring the nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956.

Page 17, Panel 1: Nidal's father is reading the Lebanese newspaper *Annahar*. The front page announces the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, formed in Kuwait in 1964.

Page 17, Panel 2: The collapse of Intra Bank on October 14, 1966 was a momentous event, setting off a major financial crisis in Lebanon and sending shockwaves throughout the region.

Page 17, Panel 3: The radio announcement about the USS Liberty approaching the Egyptian coast occurred during the 1967 war.

Page 17, Panel 4: The Cairo Agreement was reached on November 2, 1969 during talks between Yasser Arafat and then-Lebanese Army commander General Emile Bustani, with Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser overseeing the deal. The agreement established the right for Palestinians in Lebanon "to join the Palestinian revolution through armed struggle" and allowed Palestinians independent legal control over their refugee camps in the country. The agreement was rescinded by the Lebanese parliament on May 27, 1987.

Page 18, Panel 3: The banner text is taken from one actually carried during the workers' strike. For more on the Gandour strikes, refer to the documentary film *A Feeling Great Than Love*, written and directed by Mary Jimanus.

Page 19, Panel 4: One of the core aspects of the emergent "New Left" during the 1970s was the belief that a communist should be well-read on theory in order to be able to educate the masses and effect fundamental changes to society. For more on this, please refer to Agnès Favier's research on the rise of a generation of intellectual militants.

Page 20, Panel 3: "Second wave" feminism in Lebanon tended to be partisan; for example al-Tajammo' al-nisa'i al-dimocrati al-lubnani (Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering - LWDG) founded in 1976 was a sister organization of Munazamat al-'amal al-shuyu'i fi lubnan (the Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon - OCAL), while al-Ittihad al-nisa'i al-taqaddumi (The Progressive Women's Union) founded in 1980, was affiliated to the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP). These organizations could not form a political agenda independent of the political parties to which they were affiliated.

Page 20, Panel 4: Nidal is seen here reading *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan, one of the many works of feminist literature that helped spark the "second wave" of feminism in the US. Other seminal examples of feminist literature that inspired the second wave feminists include: *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), by Shulamith Firestone, and *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm* (1970), by Anne Koedt.

Page 22, Panel 2: According to multiple testimonies from militants of the era, women were often sidelined to roles providing logistical and telecommunications support for various resistance activities.

Page 23, Panel 2: The posters depicted here are actual posters from the time period. For more on this, refer to The Palestine Poster Project Archives at palestineposterproject.org.

Chapter 3: Haifa's Story

Page 28, Panel 4: The globalization of feminist causes provided feminist organizations with new tools for advocacy and lobbying, usually framed within legal reformism. This globalization also contributed to the proliferation of feminist organizations that relied heavily on international funding. Access to international networks gave them important resources, such as financial assistance in the form of project grants, capacity building, and training on international human rights instruments.

Page 29, Panel 1: "Third wave" feminism in Lebanon began in the early 1990s, during the run-up and preparations for the "Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development, and Peace," convened by the United Nations in September 1995 in Beijing, China. Activists consider this conference a central event in the development of the Lebanese feminist movement. It gave international legitimacy to women's causes and helped dismantle the partisan hegemony around feminist issues. As one activist explained, the Beijing conference affirmed that: "Finally, the feminist agenda became legitimized: [it] became part of an international debate, and it was up to us to make the connection between what was decided at the global level and the campaigns we were conducting at the local level."

Page 29, Panel 2: The Arab Women's Court was a symbolic court formed by women judges, lawyers, university professors, researchers, writers, artists, parliamentarians, and public figures in the Arab women's movement, in addition to a number of survivors of domestic violence. The members of the Court convened in Beirut from June 28-30, 1995; together, the women represented 14 different Arab countries. The Court heard 33 live testimonies from survivors of violence. This was the first time in the history of the women's movement that a symbolic event was held to condemn violence against women. The Arab Women's Court followed a model implemented in many countries in preparation for the International Women's Court, which was established months later (September 1995) in Beijing, as part of the activities of the International Conference on Women.

Page 30: Hilary Clinton gave a speech during the Beijing conference entitled "Women's Rights Are Human Rights." The conference marked a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, adopted unanimously by 189 countries, set an agenda for women's empowerment and were considered the key global policy documents on gender equality.

CEDAW, or the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, was adopted by the UNGA on December 18, 1979, and ratified by Lebanon in 1997. The ratification was followed by the establishment, in 1998, of the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), which is affiliated with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Lebanon has maintained reservations on CEDAW Article 9(2), regarding nationality, on several subparagraphs of Article 16(1), related to personal status laws, and on Article 29(1), on the settlement of disputes on the interpretation of Convention to the International Court of Justice (source: unwomen.org).

Page 33: In 2014, the Lebanese Parliament approved a law aimed at protecting women and other members of the family from domestic violence and physical abuse. Parliament, however, included major amendments to the draft submitted by the National Coalition for a Law to Protect Women from Family Violence, a body composed of 41 different human rights organizations. While the coalition raised objections to the amended form of the law, they still considered its passing as "one of the most important achievements of the women's rights movement in Lebanon" (source: <https://kafa.org.lb/ar/node/19>).

Chapter 4: Noora's Story

Page 36: On May 25, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces withdrew from most of the territory in southern Lebanon that they had occupied over the course of their multiple wars on the country.

Hafez al-Assad, the Syrian dictator who had ruled Syria since 1971, died shortly thereafter on June 10, 2000. Power passed to his son, Bashar al-Assad, the current dictator of Syria.

The second intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, erupted on September 28, 2000 in occupied Jerusalem in response to the failures of the peace process and the ongoing Israeli occupation and annexation of Palestinian land.

In this context, new Leftist organizations had begun forming outside the Lebanese Communist Party, part of a dissenting opposition that had been growing within. The main divergences between the old guard and the new had to do with opinions vis-à-vis the Syrian regime's hegemony over Lebanon after the civil war and its role in suppressing public and private liberties. Al-Nizam al-Amni al-Lubnani al-Souri took an active role not only in banning all political parties opposed to it, but also in helping coopt the General Labor Union in Lebanon.

Page 39, Panel 1: The "No War, No Dictatorships" campaign was organized in 2003 in Beirut by independent leftist groups, such as "Communist Students", "No Frontiers", and "Direct Line" to name a few. The campaign was opposed to the imperialist war waged on Iraq while also standing in solidarity with the Iraqis against Saddam Hussein's regime.

Page 39, Panel 2: The Druze community use five colors ("Five Limits") as part of their religious symbology: green, red, yellow, blue, and white.

Page 40, Panels 2-3: Homosexual practices are criminalized in Article 534 of the 1943 Lebanese Penal Code. A conviction of engaging in homosexual acts carries a punishment of imprisonment of up to one year. The expression of a non-conforming gender identity can be prosecuted under several other articles that regulate public morality.

Page 41, Panels 2-5: The stories recounted by women of their experiences in Helem are consistent with those of many women within various LGBTIQ movements around the world, specifically on the issue of organizational relationships between women and men. While Helem positioned itself in principle against the patriarchal system, gay and lesbian activism reproduced sexist logics. Those patriarchal power relations and how they played out in multiple disputes ultimately led to the secession of women.

The activists of this wave adopted a critical position vis-a-vis existing feminist organizations, specifically with regards to their complete marginalization of issues related to sexual rights and freedoms. They emphasized the need for "intersectional" discourse in order to be able to achieve liberation for women.

Page 44, Panel 3: The banner, "Patriarchy Kills", was raised by the Feminist Bloc, a coalition made up of a number of feminist organizations.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Abisaab, Malek. *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation*. Syracuse University Press, 2010.

Al-Ali, Nadjé, "Gendering Reconstruction: Iraqi Women between Dictatorship, Wars, Sanctions and Occupation." *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4-5, pp 739-758, Routledge, 2005.

Daou, Bernadette, "Les féminismes au Liban: un dynamisme de positionnement par rapport au patriarcat et un renouvellement au sein du "Printemps Arabe"", Master's thesis, Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut, October 2014.

Daou, Walid, "What are the possible strategies for the emergence of a democratic and revolutionary labour movement in Lebanon?" In *Where are the unions? Workers and social movements in Latin America, the Middle East, and Europe*. Ed. Lazar, Sian. Zed books Ltd., 2017.

Favier, Agnès, "Logiques de l'engagement et mode de contestation au Liban: Genèse d'une génération de militants intellectuels (1958-1975)", Thèse de Doctorat, Université Paul Cézanne-Aix Marseille III, 2004.

Jad, Islah, "The NGOization of the Arab women movement," *Al-Raida*, Volume XX, No. 100 Winter 2003.

Jirmanus, Mary (Director). *A Feeling Great Than Love*. Tricontinental Media, 2017.

Karam, Karam, *Le mouvement civil au Liban: Revendications, protestations et mobilisations associatives dans l'après-guerre*, Paris, Karthala, 2006.

Kassir, Samir, *La guerre du Liban : De la dissension nationale au conflit régional*, Karthala-CERMOC, 1994.

Makarem, Ghassan, "The Story of Helem", in *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol.7, n°3, Fall 2011.

Mansour, Nisrine, "Governing the personal Family law and women's subjectivity and agency in post-conflict Lebanon", PhD thesis, London school of economics and political science, 2011.

R., Anthony, ""Moral exclusion" in the popular movement and the ideology of the ruling class", *al-Manshour*, special issue, Fall 2015.

Tejerina, Benjamín et al., "From indignation to occupation: A new wave of global mobilization", *Current Sociology*, Vol. 61, issue 4; 2013.

Yasmine, Rola; Sukkar, Batoul, "In the Pursuit of Reproductive Justice in Lebanon", *Kohl Journal*, Vol. 4 No. 2 | Centralizing Reproductive Justice, Winter 2018.

أحمد بيضون، "لبنان الاشتراكي" ظهور جماعةٍ من شبّية "اليسار الجديد" ومسارها في لبنان السّتينات"، كلمن 8، خريف 2013.

(<http://www.kalamonreview.org/articles-details-184>)

إيمان شماس شقير، "نساء في امرأة: سيرة لور مغيزل"، النهار، بيروت، 2002.

غسان صليبي، "في الاتحاد كوة"، دار مختارات، بيروت، 1999.

فهمية شرف الدين، "الحركة النسائية في لبنان"، الإسكوا، 2006.

كارولين سكر، "المجلس النسائي اللبناني: إشكاليات حركته المطلبية"، أطروحة الماجستير، الجامعة اللبنانية - معهد العلوم الاجتماعية - القسم الثاني، 2003.

ليندا مطر، "محطات من سيرة حياتي"، دار الفارابي، بيروت، 2013.



YOU ARE FREE TO:

- Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
- Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

UNDER THE FOLLOWING TERMS:

- Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
- NonCommercial — You may not use the material for commercial purposes.
- ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.
- No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

NOTICES:

- You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation.
- No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.



THE CONTENT OF THE PUBLICATION IS THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CREATORS BEHIND THIS COMIC AND DOES NOT REFLECT A POSITION OF ROSA LUXEMBURG.

