

## Women Visible in First Palestinian Local Elections

In the context of the first elections held in the Palestinian Authority, women's participation was visible, even though most did not succeed in winning seats in the governmental council. The well-known human rights activist and Professor of English Literature at Bir Zeit University, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, who served as the official spokesperson for the Palestinian delegation during the Madrid peace talks and subsequent meetings, won a seat. The only contender to Yasser Arafat's leadership of the new Palestinian entity was a woman, Samiha Al-Khalil, a highly respected social worker and political activist who founded the *In'ash al-Usra* ("Preservation of the Family") community services agency in the West Bank more than a twenty years ago. Although Al-Khalil was soundly defeated by Arafat, she succeeded in focusing discussion on important topics related to gender equality in social development, women's absence from decision-making processes in Palestine, and human rights issues.

## United Nations Report Equates Domestic Violence with Torture

In a ground-breaking report issued in late February, the United Nations stated that domestic violence suffered by women throughout the world has reached epidemic proportions and that, in its social effects and physical and emotional consequences, it is quite similar to torture. The report supports its dramatic claims with statistical data from a variety of countries, indicating that domestic violence is a social ill which knows no boundaries, whether national, religious, or economic. A United Nations spokeswoman, Dr. Kumaraswami, stated unequivocally during a press conference to announce the publication of the study that "domestic violence is tantamount to torture; it is incumbent upon all governments to enact legal measures to halt violence against the world's women." The following statistics provide a glimpse of the seriousness of the problem: In Japan, 77 percent of all women surveyed admitted that they have been physically abused by their husbands or fathers. In Kenya, 42 percent of women said that they had been beaten regularly by their husbands. The report estimates that up to 50 percent of

women world-wide are the victims of domestic violence at some time in their lives.

## International Women's Day Officially Observed in Lebanon

Lebanese First Lady Mona Al-Hrawi gave an eloquent speech to open a commemoration of International Women's Day (March 8th) in Beirut. Stating that "woman is the true mirror of her society, and one can know much about the refinement of a people by looking at the character of its women," Mrs. Al-Hrawi indicated that Lebanese women are a noble reflection of their society and culture because they have shown considerable grace under pressure and contributed so much to their country at a time of great need. She stressed that the topic of women, her rights and challenges constitute a key concern in the reconstruction of post-war Lebanese society. Following Mrs. Hrawi's speech, Lebanese University President Dr. Assad Diab commented that "Democracy and democratization in Lebanon will remain incomplete and insufficient if women remain outside the framework of the political process. We must work hard to pass positive laws, not simply to remove negative laws, in order to realize women's progress and greater participation in all realms of life." Other speakers included Dr. Muhammad Mashnouq, Maitre Laure Moghaizal, and Mrs. Wafa Hamzeh. All affirmed Mrs. Hrawi's views and sentiments concerning the important role of Lebanese women in the reconstruction of Lebanese society. Maitre Moghaizal, however, stressed that the Lebanese Government and Legislature still have a long way to go in recognizing and guaranteeing women's rights.

## Announcement

*Al-Raida* is looking for foreign correspondents to write stories on topics and issues of concern to women throughout the Arab world. If you are a professional or freelance journalist or researcher living in an Arab country, please consider submitting reports on legislation, events, conferences, debates and performances related to women and women's issues. If your article is accepted for publication, you will receive a payment of US\$100.

## Research Notes

### Recent Publications and Films of Interest

*The New Yorker Magazine* (February 26 and March 4, 1996) has published a special women's issue. Included in the issue is an article by Jane Kramer entitled "The Invisible Woman" which illuminates the unexpectedly similar problems and challenges facing women in New York City and women in a small Moroccan village.

*Middle East Report* has published a special issue on "Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East" (No. 198, January-March, 1996). Featured writers include Suad Joseph, Rita Giacaman, Jehan Helou, and Haya al-Mughni. Articles address changing notions of citizenship and gender roles in Lebanon, Palestine, Bahrain, Algeria, Iran and Turkey.

The British documentary filmmaker, Mai Masri, has recently completed a compelling video about Palestinian human rights activist and scholar Dr. Hanan Ashrawi entitled "Hanan Ashrawi: A Woman of her Time." For further information, write to Mai Masri, 33 Avenue Road, London, NW8 6BS, United Kingdom.

### Conferences

"Beijing and Beyond", a conference organized by the Sisterhood is Global Institute, will be held in Washington, D.C. in the United States on May 10-11, 1996. The conference proceedings will focus on the impact of the Beijing Conference's *Platform for Action* on women in the Muslim world. For more information, contact (301) 657-4355.

### Recent Dissertations

As-Sammak, Amina Harb. *Female Mental Health and Sociocultural Change in Kuwait: Stress, Depression and Locus of Control in Traditional-Modern Female Roles*. California School of Professional Psychology-Fresno, Ph.D.: 1994

Beaudan, Collete Juilliard. *L'Imaginaire de la femme enfermée: le regard des peintres et des écrivains du XIXe siècle français sur la femme orientale*. (Volumes I and II.) City University of New York, Ph.D.: 1994.

Al-Hefdhy, Yahya Suliman. *The Role of the Ulama (Islamic Scholars) in Establishing an Islamic Education System for*

Women in Saudi Arabia. The Florida State University, Ph.D.: 1994.

Khatib, Maha Kasim. *Beyond the Mysterious and Exotic: Women of the Emirates (and I) Assess their Lives and Society*. Brown University, Ph.D., 1994.

Nakanishi, Hisae. *Creating the "Ideal" Woman and Reconstructing "Islamic" Women: Ideology, Power, and Women's Consciousness in Post-Revolutionary Iran*. University of California, Los Angeles, Ph.D., 1994.

### Forthcoming Publication

Nour Publishing, the first women's publishing house in the Arab world, will soon issue a book emanating from a book fair and conference held in Cairo in late 1995. The forthcoming publication will include scholarly evaluations of social sciences in the Arab world, women's movements in the region, women's literary productions, the image of women in popular and classical Arabic literature, and the impact of *shari'a* (the Islamic legal code) on women in the Arab world. Contributors include Khawla Mattar, Suheir Mursi, Eileen Kuttab, Dalal Bizri, Hasna Hamzoui and Abdul-Hamid Hawwas, among others. The forthcoming volume will be the latest in a series of valuable publications produced by Nour Publishing. For further information, contact Hasna Mikdashi, Nour Publishing, *Dar al-Mara' al-Arabiyya*, No. 9 Mudiriyyat at-Tahreer Street, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Nour Publishing is also seeking distributors for its books. Interested distributors should contact Ms. Mikdashi at the above address.

### Academic Prize for Arab Women Writers

Nour Publishing announces that it will bestow two prizes on deserving women writers and scholars in 1996. Nour will award one prize for the best social science research undertaken by a woman on any topic related to women in the Arab world, and a second prize to the best novel written by a young, as-yet-unknown woman writer. Submissions for the Social Science award may be written in English, Arabic or French; submissions for the Literary Award must be written in Arabic. The prize for each category consists of the publication of the winning selection and an opportunity for the awardee to meet with distinguished critics to discuss the published work. For further information, write to Hasna Mikdashi at the above address.