

**Laure  
Moughaizel**

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*Farewell  
to a Pioneer*

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*Ghena Ismail*

On Sunday, May 25, 1997, Maître Laure Moughaizel decided to bid us farewell, leaving us all in utter dismay and grief.

Laure Moughaizel's career as a fighter started during her student years in law school. At a national students' demonstration she met her future husband Joseph, and this demonstration continued throughout their shared lives. Together, they formed a harmonious and diligent team in the service of human rights. Before civil strife broke out in Lebanon, they had established the National Progressive Movement, the Democratic Party, and the United Reformation Front of Lebanon. During the war, their convictions did not alter. On the contrary, they became even more committed to public welfare and together founded the Human Rights Association and the Non-Violence Movements both of which aimed at eradicating the internal barriers during the Lebanese civil war.

"Laure Moughaizel has died." I had to hear it and say it several times before I could believe it. The fact was hard to grasp; how could it not be, when just two months before we had seen her actively participating in a conference about gender and women's citizenship at the AUB. When I first heard that Laure Moughaizel had passed away, I could not but wonder whether she knew then, during the conference, that death would so soon befall her. Later on I reasoned that she must have known, for she had been suffering from cancer for three years. However, to someone like Laure, sickness or even approaching death would hardly have mattered, for we saw how bravely she went through the great ordeals of her daughter's death during the war and her husband's death two years ago.

Laure has left us but, her noble presence and great contributions will remain forever vivid in our minds.

Excerpts follow from very sensitive speeches written about Laure by people who knew her.

### *Quotations from Speeches about Laure*

"No two names were united the way Laure and Joseph's names were. As if it is one compound name. As if Joseph is Laure's surname or family name, and as if Laure is Joseph's title, residence or nationality..."

Joseph and Laure ... You can omit the "and", or refer to either one while you mean the other. When Joseph passed away and Laure was still alive, we did not notice the absence of either one...

Today only, did Joseph and Laure pass away. Today, we bid farewell to the one love that branched out into two bodies. The love that gave birth to two creatures: Fadi and Nada. The love

that is pronounced in two ways: Joseph and Laure."

*George Nasif  
Journalist, "An-Nahar"*

"She is the one who told her life companion, Joseph, one year after his death, 'This love to which you have committed yourself yielded a group of ideals ...'

Laure did not wait for May 29 to write her 'life companion' who left her on May 29, 1995 a second letter...

When she spoke of beginnings, she often said that she was one of few privileged women because she was raised in a family that believed in woman's rights and thus provided her with the best opportunities, whether on the educational or social level...

She did not hesitate to participate in the 1950s' demonstrations, and on one of the student fronts she met Joseph Moughaizel, who later became her friend and beloved husband. Together, they became a "couple" in a home whose concerns revolved around the country, whose dreams were those of humanity, and whose cause was equality.

Never was woman's equality to man her ultimate goal. How will the working woman benefit if she is equal to a man whose wage is too low to secure a respectable living?"

*Wissam Abou Harfouche  
Journalist, "An-Nahar"*

"With Laure's death, Lebanon loses a distinctive character and an important figure that symbolizes human, children's, and woman's rights. Laure was the ideal example and legal reference. We have lost a Lebanese ambassador who was known for her wide knowledge and right convictions and was thus respected by people all over the world."

*Nayla Mouawwad, MP*

"To the most beautiful woman in the world,

If any woman has ever enjoyed any humanitarian rights, it was because of Laure, and if any woman has characteristics similar to those of Laure, then she must be on her way to real beauty. To the woman with whom working was not easy, and how could it be when she has been the most 'experienced,' 'meticulous' and 'perfectionist'. Laure's vision has surpassed her time and reality.

I send my thanks and respect to the woman who gave me two years from her experience."

*Mirella Abdul-Sater, lawyer*

“ My friend,  
 Everyone will write about your accomplishments and will refer to you as the heroine. As for me, I will not write about Laure, the great lawyer; I will write about the sensitive, patient and discrete woman with whom I have shared much in life. Laure and I have attended conferences together and our spouses were colleagues in the Committee of the Book’s Friends and the Committee for Human Rights. Eventually, Laure and I shared sadness, as we lost our young daughters and later our husbands. In Paris, she was profoundly sad, but she did not want to reveal her sadness. Since she was strongly yearning for her deceased daughter, as soon as we were back in our bedroom, she sat next to me and told me, ‘let’s mourn our deceased.’ Oh, my friend, you have been so discrete and patient so as not to disturb anyone, until sickness conquered you. My penalty is that I have stayed long enough to witness the burial of my loved ones.”

*Anissa Najjar*  
*President, Rural Development Association*

### *Laure’s Own Words*

*(excerpted from an interview published in Al-Raida #74/45)*

“Women’s rights are inevitably part of human rights. There cannot be human rights without women’s rights, nor can there be women’s rights outside the framework of human rights ... I simply cannot imagine humanity divided into two sections: one for women and another for men.”

In reference to her new position as a Member of the United Nations Committee for Human Rights, Laure said:

“I believe I will have a double mission. On the one hand, I will try to unite the efforts of all those concerned with human rights in order to get Lebanon to implement the laws of the international conventions for civil and political rights ... On the other hand ... I consider this a good opportunity for Lebanon to contribute to the defense of human rights and their development on the global level. This is an honor and a responsibility at the same time.”\*

And we say to Laure that as much as we feel honored to have had someone like her representing us for the past half century, we feel a sense of responsibility. Building upon whatever she has started should be our mission for years to come.

\* For more information about Laure check Al-Raida issue # 74/75, 70/71, 49.

### **IDENTIFICATION CARD**

- Born in 1929 in Hasbayeh (South Lebanon), and married in 1953 to Joseph Moughaizel, former Member of Parliament, who passed away in 1995.
- The mother of five children.
- Received degrees in Arabic, Philosophy, and Law from the Institute of Oriental Studies at Saint Joseph University.
- Prominent Lebanese lawyer and Human Rights’ activist.
- The first Arab woman to be appointed to the United Nations Committee for Human Rights.
- Member of 37 Lebanese, Arab, and international committees and organizations, and founding member of 13 of them.
- Member of several women’s councils.
- Participant in 31 conferences about women (1945 - 1997) all over the world.
- Trilingual author (Arabic, French, English) and co-author of 13 publications on women’s rights, human rights and development; publisher of several studies and coordinator of printed and audio-visual interviews.