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Women and Politics in the Arab World

This special issue of *Raïda* is devoted to the theme Women and Politics in the Arab World. Beyond the opinions, surveys and discussions concerning women's participation in politics, the obstacles they face and the achievements they made, the following pages are a quest for a new approach to politics in general.

In this issue's 'Opinion', Monica Tarazi relates one day in the life, blood, horror and death of the Palestinian Intifada. She damns a world that does not care, in the name of a people whose "only crime is to exist at all".

The first article under our main theme is by Mona Makram Obeid, political sociologist and prominent member of the Wafd party. Mona takes the lead from C. Wright Mill's 'intellectual craftsmanship' to write a personal testimony of her experiences as an Egyptian MP. Amal Kawar reviews the development of Palestinian women's participation in political life and decision-making against the paradoxical background of state building, unleashed by the Oslo accords, and the renewal of the Intifada. Playing a crucial role in national liberation, Palestinian women remain 'invisible to decision makers and the media', concludes Kawar. Rana Hussein, on her part, argues the case that political tribalism constitutes a major obstacle to women's participation in Jordan's parliamentary life.

The issue's roundtable is centered on the controversial issue of the women's political quota in Lebanon. Participants Linda Mattar, Iqbal Doughan, Azza Sharara Baydoun, Najla Hamadeh, Mona Khalaf, Joseph Moawad, Fawwaz Traboulsi and Miriam Sfeir argue its validity and feasibility in a country whose political system is already based on sectarian political quotas.

Bariaa Ahmar Sreih makes the point that political sectarianism is a major obstacle to women's participation in political life in Lebanon. She adds that the lack of solidarity among women also accounts for much in their poor show in the last parliamentary elections. Also on Lebanon, Marguerite Helou analyses the major factors influencing female participation in parliamentary and municipal elections by comparing three field studies undertaken in the post-Taef period. Under the title " 'Quota' in the Field: "My Lady Take Your Place" ", Hind Assaf Soufi undertook an extensive survey on the attitudes of the Lebanese towards the Quota system, presented by Ghena Ismail. Miriam Sfeir interviews MP Nayla Moawad on the making of a woman MP in Lebanon, her ambitions, achievements and her 'succession'. Heba El-Shazli reports on the first conference on Women and Parliamentary Elections organized by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) held in Cairo last March. Finally, in the book review section, Zeina Misk brushes the portrait of Maud Fargeallah (1909-1995), the Lebanese socialite who, in the forties and fifties, "made and unmade ministers and presidents in her salon".

Fawwaz Traboulsi