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## Abstract:

The 2019 Lebanese Uprising and the 1987 First Palestinian Intifada are two of the most significant movements in modern history in the Middle East. A huge part of the two populations were striving for change. In the Lebanese case, people took to the streets and demanded an end to corruption, the beginning of a new and more prosperous Lebanon and, most importantly, an overthrow of the government. In the Palestinian case, it was a struggle for freedom, a fight for the recognition of the Palestinian State by the world and an end to the Israeli occupation. One of the most striking aspects of these two movements is the strong presence and involvement of women and the crucial roles they played.

This thesis examines the roles women played in these two movements, through the lens of 'collective identity', a theory often used while studying social movements of all kinds. Not only was an extensive pool of literary resource used, including books, journals, reports, and newspaper articles, in order to examine such a topic, but also field work. Interviews were conducted with a handful of Lebanese women who played an important role in the movement. Questions were asked regarding the movement in general, but more specifically relating to the involvement and roles of women.

Although the focus of this paper is the roles of women in both the Lebanese Revolution and Palestinian Intifada, it is important to firstly set the tone. That is why all social theories and terms important to this thesis are explained. This is followed by a brief history of Lebanon and an explanation of the Lebanese Revolution in general, finally focusing on the involvement and roles of women. The exact same was then done in the Palestinian case. Finally, the roles of women within the two movements were compared, in order to examine whether any parallels could be drawn, followed by an analysis of whether the movements were successful in general and if any changes were brought about for women, more specifically.

What this thesis conveys is the striking fact that, although these movements are decades apart, within both movements, two collective identities were created. The first one is the 'national collective identity', which is made up of women as well as men. Within this identity, people were striving for national change in both the Lebanese and Palestinian cases. One could think that there would be only one collective identity in a national movement; however, what

makes these two movements stand out is that a second collectivity was created in parallel, namely, a 'female collective identity', which is, in both cases, comprised of Palestinian and Lebanese women only.

Through research, it became evident that women in both countries, through the roles they played, were a part of both collective identities. As part of the 'national collective identity', they aided their brothers in the national struggle, taking place in both countries at different times. The second collective identity is, in both cases, created by women in order for them to break the patriarchal ceiling placed upon them by their societies and to gain more rights and freedoms, as they believe that the national struggle cannot be successful if their needs and rights are left behind.

Neither the 2019 Lebanese Revolution nor the 1987 Palestinian Intifada were successful in achieving what they set out to do. This is highly visualized through the current economic and political crisis in Lebanon, on the one hand, and the fact that Palestinians are still living under the Israeli occupation, on the other. Not much was achieved towards the demands of women as part of the 'female collective identity' either. Women in both cases did not gain many rights; however, what they did gain is the feeling of satisfaction that they made themselves visible and heard. They were adamant, through the creation of their own collective identity in both cases, to break through the patriarchal structures of their societies, and although they did not achieve any tangible success, their achievement was to have gained a voice.

## Abstrakt:

Die libanesische Revolution von 2019 und die erste palästinensische Intifada von 1987 sind zwei der bedeutendsten Bewegungen der modernen Geschichte im Nahen Osten. Ein großer Teil beider Bevölkerungen strebte nach Veränderung. Im libanesischen Fall gingen die Menschen auf die Straße und forderten ein Ende der Korruption, den Beginn eines neuen und wohlhabenderen Libanons und vor allem einen Sturz der Regierung. Im palästinensischen Fall war es ein Kampf für die Freiheit, ein Kampf für die Anerkennung des palästinensischen Staates durch die Welt und ein Ende der israelischen Besetzung. Einer der auffälligsten Aspekte dieser beiden Bewegungen ist die starke Präsenz und Beteiligung von Frauen und die entscheidende Rolle, die sie spielten.

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Rollen, die Frauen in diesen beiden Bewegungen spielten, durch die Linse der „kollektiven Identität“, einer Theorie, die oft verwendet wird, wenn soziale Bewegungen aller Art untersucht werden. Um ein solches Thema zu untersuchen, wurde nicht nur ein umfangreicher Pool an literarischen Ressourcen verwendet, darunter Bücher, Zeitschriften, Berichte und Zeitungsartikel, sondern auch Feldforschung. Es wurden Interviews mit einer Handvoll libanesischer Frauen geführt, die eine wichtige Rolle in der Bewegung spielten. Es wurden Fragen zur Bewegung im allgemeinen gestellt, aber insbesondere zur Beteiligung und den Rollen von Frauen.

Obwohl der Schwerpunkt dieser These auf der Rollen der Frauen sowohl in der libanesischen Revolution als auch in der palästinensischen Intifada liegt, ist es wichtig, zunächst Grundsätze darzulegen. Aus diesem Grund werden alle für diese Arbeit wichtigen Gesellschaftstheorien und Begriffe erläutert. Es folgen eine kurze Geschichte des Libanons und eine Erläuterung der libanesischen Revolution im allgemeinen, wobei der Schwerpunkt schließlich auf der Beteiligung und der Rolle von Frauen liegt. Genau dasselbe wurde dann im palästinensischen Fall gemacht. Abschließend wurden die Rollen der Frauen innerhalb beider Bewegungen verglichen, um zu prüfen, ob Parallelen gezogen werden können, gefolgt von einer Analyse, ob die Bewegungen im allgemeinen erfolgreich waren und ob insbesondere Änderungen für Frauen bewirkt werden konnten.

Was diese Arbeit vermittelt, ist die bemerkenswerte Tatsache, dass, obwohl diese Bewegungen Jahrzehnte voneinander entfernt sind, innerhalb beider Bewegungen zwei kollektive Identitäten geschaffen wurden. Die erste ist die „nationale kollektive Identität“, die sich sowohl aus Frauen als auch aus Männern zusammensetzt. Innerhalb dieser Identität strebten die Menschen sowohl im libanesischen als auch im palästinensischen Fall nach einem nationalen Wandel. Man könnte meinen, dass es in einer nationalen Bewegung nur eine kollektive Identität gibt; was diese beiden Bewegungen jedoch auszeichnet, ist, dass parallel ein zweites Kollektiv geschaffen wurde, nämlich eine „weibliche kollektive Identität“, die in beiden Fällen nur aus palästinensischen und libanesischen Frauen bestand.

Durch meine Recherche wurde deutlich, dass Frauen in beiden Ländern durch die Rollen, die sie spielten, Teil beider kollektiver Identitäten waren. Als Teil der „nationalen kollektiven Identität“ unterstützten sie ihre Brüder im nationalen Kampf, der in beiden Ländern zu unterschiedlichen Zeiten stattfand. Die zweite kollektive Identität wurde in beiden Fällen von Frauen geschaffen, um die ihnen von ihren Gesellschaften auferlegte patriarchalische Decke zu durchbrechen und mehr Rechte und Freiheiten zu erlangen. Sie vertraten nämlich die Ansicht, dass der nationale Kampf nicht erfolgreich sein könne, solange ihre Bedürfnisse und Rechte vernachlässigt bleiben.

Weder die libanesische Revolution von 2019 noch die palästinensische Intifada von 1987 konnten erfolgreich das erreichen, was sie sich vorgenommen hatten. Dies wird einerseits durch die aktuelle wirtschaftliche und politische Krise im Libanon und andererseits durch die Tatsache, dass Palästinenser immer noch unter israelischer Besetzung leben, stark visualisiert. Auch für die Forderungen der Frau als Teil der „weiblichen kollektiven Identität“ wurde nicht viel erreicht. Frauen erhielten in beiden Fällen nicht wesentlich mehr Rechte; was sie jedoch gewinnen konnten, ist das Gefühl der Genugtuung, sie sich sichtbar und hörbar gemacht zu haben. Sie wollten unbedingt durch die Schaffung einer eigenen kollektiven Identität die patriarchalischen Strukturen ihrer Gesellschaften durchbrechen, und obwohl sie keinen greifbaren Erfolg erzielten, bestand ihre Leistung darin, eine deutlich hörbare Stimme gewonnen zu haben.

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## 1. Introduction

Social movements, in their vast variety, are part of almost every country's history, at some point. Revolutions, protests, social upheavals and demonstrations are reoccurring phenomena. Although they might be initiated due to different reasons, and by different parties, what all social movements have in common is that a certain group of people demands change or aims at resisting change. The 2019 Lebanese Revolution and the First Palestinian *Intifada* are only two examples of social movements that have taken place in the last five decades. Both movements were ignited by people's desire for change, change for a better future for them and those coming after them.

Within this thesis, the involvement of women within both these movements will be discussed and analyzed. In both the 2019 Lebanese Revolution as well as the 1987 First Palestinian *Intifada*, women played a plethora of important roles. In social movements, it is often the case that women and men take on different roles. Due to their position in various societies, they have distinct needs, social responsibilities, expectations and power, resulting in them taking on different roles (Kuumba, 2001, p.14). Women were key actors in both movements and played distinct roles, some of which were different to those played by men. The women's struggle in both movements, just as is the case for some other movements involving women, was ignited by the social and political oppression they had witnessed for decades and the desperate need for change, for them as a group (Al- Natour, 2012).

This thesis aims to shed light on the roles women played in both movements, as well as to compare those roles. I argue that women, separately in each of these two movements, were part of two collective identities in parallel. Not only were they part of the, so to say, 'national collective identity' which comprised a huge number of the Palestinian and Lebanese people, but also a part of the 'female collective identity' comprised of a large number of the Palestinian and Lebanese women. The word national will be used in order to explain the first of the two collective identities, due to the fact that such a huge part of the two nations participated in each country's movement, while the second collective identity will be labelled as female as it was mostly women who were comprising the collectivity. I argue that both the Lebanese Revolution as well as the Palestinian *Intifada* opened up the field for women to form their own collective

identity, within the broader collective identity, to air their own grievances and attempt to evoke change. The importance of this collectivity is that women of different ages, social spheres and religions came together in order to evoke change for them and all women to come, within their societies. Through the use of feminist theories, such as those relating to patriarchy, and practical and strategic interests, which will be discussed in further detail within the sections to come, I aim to convey that the women in both movements both aided in the national struggle and revolution and demanded more rights in their patriarchal societies.

Prior to discussing the involvement of women, certain aspects must be introduced. To begin with, I will discuss vital concepts, including social movements, feminist theory, the involvement of women in social movements and the concept and theory of collective identity. Furthermore, the history of Lebanon, the 2019 Lebanese Revolution as well as the involvement of women within it will be discussed. The same will then be done for the First Palestinian *Intifada*. Finally, the roles of women in both movements will be compared in order to identify similarities and differences. Finally, I will be analyzing whether change could be brought about. All of this will be done through the lens of collective identity and feminist theory. Interviews were conducted with four Lebanese women, who were highly present within their revolution, in order to give my thesis more anthropological depth and provide first-hand information from individuals who were present on the ground.

Furthermore, I will be attempting to demonstrate that, although these two movements were decades apart, similarities can be identified not only in the various roles women played but also in the pertinent traits of 'national collective identity' and 'female collective identity' exhibited in both movements, which will be the conceptual framework of this thesis. Although the national movements were not identical in their demands and the changes they sought, it is interesting to see that the two collective identities were present.

## **2. Why and How this Thesis Came to Be - Methodology**

The process of completing this thesis was certainly quite different from what I had expected due to a variety of reasons. Firstly, COVID-19, which has altered the way we live since the beginning of 2020, made it quite difficult to travel and conduct any sort of field work per say during the crucial part of this thesis. Due to the pandemic and its global restrictions, on-the-ground fieldwork in a country other than Austria was impossible.

The two countries I had chosen for my paper were not the most easily accessible to begin with. Although I am the daughter of an Austrian mother and a Lebanese/Palestinian father, I was not able to do on-the-ground fieldwork within the two countries of my choice. Palestine is very hard to enter for anyone; however, it is even harder for someone like me. Since I travel to Lebanon twice a year to visit my family, I am not allowed to enter Israel, which is the main way to get into the Palestinian territories. As an Arab person, specifically a Lebanese, an Israeli stamp in my passport creates serious difficulties for me on re-entering Lebanon. So traveling to Palestine was off my list, but I was adamant not to give up on this topic and to include some sort of my own anthropological data. Lebanon was my only option to do so. COVID-19 in itself made it extremely difficult for me to travel, but the deteriorating economic and political situation in Lebanon seriously increased safety and security risks. In the summer of 2020, at the peak of my research, Lebanon saw one of its darkest days. On August 4, a huge amount of ammonium nitrate, which was stored at the port of Beirut, exploded. In one of the worst explosions in history, more than 200 people died, thousands were severely injured and hundreds of thousands were left homeless. With this horrible incident, my last chance to fly to Lebanon to carry out my research literally went up in smoke.

I was sad and confused as to what was going to happen with my research. I repeatedly considered changing my topic, but it was so dear to my heart that I could not get myself to taking such a decision. Although I was told that it is possible to write an anthropological thesis based solely on scholarly publications and other written sources, I did not believe it would suffice in this case and looked for a way to include my own data by means of some sort of field work. COVID-19 and the situation in Lebanon, which prohibited me from visiting my family for years, made me realize the power of technology. The way our university classes continued via

zoom, the way people were still able to conduct international meetings via skype and other video conferencing software's or the way I could see my family via WhatsApp calls, although I was thousands of kilometers away, made me realize that interviews did not necessarily have to be conducted in person. Social media, specifically Instagram, allowed me to connect to people whose information and contribution have helped me immensely.

It was not easy to find people who had the time and energy to help me while going through a time of a social upheaval, the COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented economic struggle and the aftermath of one of the largest explosions in history. After weeks of searching, I finally found four women who were willing to take time out of their day and assist me in my endeavour. It was a blessing to have found them because all of them played a part in the 2019 Lebanese Revolution. Via WhatsApp call, they answered my questions about both the revolution in general and the involvement of women in particular. The questions focused on the following aspects: why the revolution erupted in the first place; whether its motives changed throughout the course of time; whether the revolution brought about any change; who the actors involved within the movement were; what the roles of women within the revolution were; and whether the presence of women influenced the revolution. Furthermore, I was interested to see whether the demands of women were the same as of men or whether they had separate and additional interests.

The data collected for my master thesis originated from two main sources. Firstly, they come from a detailed literary research relating to both the first Palestinian *Intifada* and the Lebanese Revolution. I used a variety of sources including books, journals, reports, newspaper articles and additional Internet documents in order to compile enough information relating to both social movements at hand. It took me months to read thousands of pages until I obtained sufficient information for a structured and informative thesis. Secondly, they include the interviews I previously mentioned which give the thesis more depth and inside knowledge. To my mind, it is very important to include first-hand experience of a people who themselves partook in one of the two movements tackled in this thesis.

Due to personal health reasons, the situation in Lebanon and the COVID-19 pandemic, the process of completing my thesis was not an easy one. After months of research, I was finally

able to commence writing only to be surprised by sudden deteriorating health. For six months, from the end of 2021 until April 2022, I was unable to work on my thesis and everything was put on hold. In April of this year, I was finally able to embark on the writing process. Despite the drawbacks, producing this thesis has been an experience I cherish tremendously, and I am sure that all the hurdles along the way happened for a reason. Writing such an extensive piece is never easy, and I am grateful that in the end I was able to write it on the particular topic I have long been so passionate about.

The two countries which are subject to my thesis are very dear to my heart, partly for very personal reasons. I was set on shedding light not only on the social movements of both countries, but more specifically on the involvement of women within them. Growing up, it was a known fact to me that the rights of women in both Palestine and Lebanon differ from the rights of men. When I became aware of the high presence and involvement of women within these movements, I was adamant to use this as the topic of my thesis. The fact that Lebanese and Palestinian women, living in patriarchal societies, were gaining a voice and were making themselves more visible within social movements in their countries inspired me to dig deeper.

### **3. Social Movements and Collective Identity**

Prior to commencing with the actual discussion of the Lebanese Revolution of 2019 and the First Palestinian *Intifada* of 1987, it is important to discuss some significant concepts. This section explains social movements and its different types; the feminist theory and the involvement of women within social movements in general with the inclusion of some examples; and the concept and theory of collective identity as a vital concept used within this thesis.

#### **3.1 Social Movements**

Although a variety of different types of social movements exists, focus will be placed on reformative and transformative movements. The difference between the two is that reformative movements aspire partial change in a given social system while transformative movements aspire a complete change within a system (Saha, 2015). The former strives for change in a part of the system, for example women wanting more rights, while the latter seeks change of the complete system, for example a full-fledged revolution. While the different definitions of social movements tend to vary relating to what is emphasized on, many include the following aspects: collective or joint action, change-oriented goals, some additional or extra collective action, some degree of organization and lastly some sort of continuity (Kriesi et al, 2004, p.6).

“American sociologists define social movements as highly organised but non-routine entities where people interact to establish new meanings about politics (and other subjects), and where they challenge power based on the making of these new meanings” (Saha, 2015). Social movements can occur because of a variety of different reasons, but what they all have in common is that they challenge some sort of power with the intention to evoking change. The movements themselves are not what creates the change, but rather the relationships between the various actors and their formation as a unified entity challenge the power at hand (Saha, 2015).

Generally speaking, social movements are a modern concept and phenomenon occurring in both the so-called First and Third World (Saha, 2015). They can occur in any country and

under any type of governmental system. Social movements can occur as an upheaval against a dictator or regime, against a democratic leadership or any other form of ruling. The various actors use a variety of tactics and strategies in order to be successful. These movements are noticeable through aspects such as demonstrations, protests, sit-ins and, most importantly, through the involvement of a group of individuals, who have come together to evoke change (Khiabany, 2012). Nowadays, technology also plays a big part in social movements. Facebook, Instagram or Twitter are ideal platforms for people to share their thoughts and beliefs. Modern technology allows for a fast circulation of information, which can lead to the success of the movement (Khiabany, 2012). Information travels much faster, meaning that more people can be involved more quickly, allowing the movement to grow at a higher speed.

It can be argued what type of social movement the Lebanese Revolution and the Palestinian *Intifada*, as focus of the paper, should be categorized as. Extensive research and some fieldwork led me to categorize them as revolutions or uprisings. Throughout my research, I have come to realize that the two concepts are often used interchangeably when discussing a specific social movement. Uprisings, which can be defined as an act of resistance according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, can be used as the term to describe both the Lebanese and Palestinian case, as in both movements the people resisted institutions and a system not allowing them to live a dignified life. But what about the word revolution, can it be used in both instances? Was the movement in Lebanon really a revolution? Can the First *Intifada* be categorized as one?

Scholarly opinions on the term revolution vary and that is why it is not as easy as it might seem to define such a concept (Al-Salim, 2020, p. 2). The 1947 Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2014), on the one hand, defines a revolution as "a fundamental change in political organization, or in a government or constitution; the overthrow or renunciation of one government or ruler, and the substitution of another, by the governed" (Al-Salim, 2020, p. 3). On the other hand, the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (2007) defines a revolution more narrowly as "a forcible substitution of a new form of government", or with even further nuance, "the complete overthrow of an established government or social order by those previously subject to it" (Al-Salim, 2020, p. 3). So, just like an uprising, a revolution is an act of resistance against a certain

party, in many cases the government or the entity ruling over a certain group of people.

Although violence is not a must when it comes to defining the term revolution, the word does often go hand in hand with violence. As a process, the term “revolution” refers to a movement, often including violence, to create complete change within a society and overthrow an old regime (Neitzel, p. 1).

“Although there are a variety of different reasons why revolutions can occur, often they ignite due to one, or more of the following five reasons; mass frustration, dissident elites, unifying motivations, crisis within the state caused by defeat in war, or economic depression and a permissive or tolerant world context” (Al-Salim, 2020, p. 3). Within the Palestinian and Lebanese cases, one could argue that more than one of these reasons led to the outbreak of both movements. To answer the question previously asked on how I would categorize the two movements at hand, in my opinion, both can be categorized as revolutions. Although the case of the First Palestinian *Intifada* is more complex, as it did not attempt to topple or alter aspects of Palestinian governmental institutions but rather those of Israel, it can still be labelled as a revolution (King, 2007). One can argue that the Palestinian people felt a mass frustration and had a unifying motivation to end the occupation of their territories, which points to the fact that the *Intifada* can be called a revolution. Furthermore, according to the definition of a revolution by the Webster College Dictionary previously mentioned, the Palestinian people wanted to end the influence and power of the Israeli Government on their territories and replace it with their own national government. Although the term revolution is not used often in scholarly works, as it is always referred to as an *Intifada*, one can categorize the Palestinian movement as a revolution.

Likewise, what happened in Lebanon in 2019 can also be called a revolution. It was ignited due to mass frustration, with a unifying motivation against, and partly due, to the country’s economic depression and deteriorating state. Looking at the various definitions of the word revolution, the situation in Lebanon fits perfectly. It was “a fundamental change in political organization, or in a government or constitution; the overthrow or renunciation of one government or ruler, and the substitution of another, by the governed” (Al-Salim, 2020, p. 3). Although one can argue that little change might have come about from the Lebanese Revolution

as well as the Palestinian *Intifada* and, in general, neither of the two were completely successful in achieving their original demands, I believe that both movements can be categorized as revolutions. I do not believe, however, as we will see later on in the document, that they were successful revolutions, as neither achieved what they set out to; this does not change the fact that they were both in their own times and in their own ways, revolutions. During the interviews, most women conveyed the fact that, although they were not sure whether the Lebanese revolution could be called a successful one, most agreed on the fact that what happened in Lebanon should be called a revolution, and not calling it a revolution would only reduce its importance.

*"I get the dilemma around calling what happened a revolution. I for one can't but call it a revolution. Granted, it's different from what we usually witness in other countries. But let's not forget that usually people get to fight one dictator. In Lebanon, we're cursed with a huge number of criminals. And they've been in power for way too long. They're deeply rooted and as we can see it's very very hard to remove them. So people were frustrated at times. Some went back home losing hope, others went back to the comfort of their "zaim" and being obedient to him. Some were tired and wanted their previous oblivion back. Despite all that I consider it to be a revolution and I hope it will reignite very soon" (Interviewee 2).*

### **3.2 Feminist Theory**

"Marxism and socialism are key components in the heritage of feminist theory, with its origins being found in the 18th century, with growth in the 1970s' and 1980s' equality movements" (Arinder, 2020). There is not one singular feminist theory but rather an ever growing, evolving number of theories all under the broad heading of 'feminist theory'. There are a few main concepts surrounding this theory which include concepts such as sex, gender equality and race (Arinder, 2020). All of the theories comprising the feminist theory analyze aspects such as the oppression of women, the inequality of gender and the solutions for such aspects (Budig and Jones, 2008). This theory both analyzes the situation of the oppressed and marginalized through the feminist lens and attempts to find new ways to alter this inequality which women as well as other marginalized groups might face. The purpose of using a feminist lens is to enable the discovery of how people interact within systems and possibly offer solutions to confront and eradicate oppressive systems and structures, oppressing women and other groups of people (Arinder, 2020). Within the theory, emphasis is often placed on

oppression, but it is important to note that this does not only affect women but also other marginalized groups, such as for example the LGBTQ community.

Feminist theory explains that change can only occur when light is shed on the oppression or marginalization of women or other groups (Arinder, 2020). The theory focuses on diminishing or altering the level of oppression of women and other groups. Nowadays, one of the most important and extensive parts of feminist theory is in relation to the concept of patriarchy (German, 2006). To date, many societies still exist, which are based on patriarchal structures at all levels of society, in which the contribution of men to society is seen as more important and valuable (Budig and Jones, 2008). Such theories, relating to the concept of patriarchy, evaluate the position of women in different societies and portray the fact that a change needs to occur (German, 2006). The theory shows that in patriarchal societies women are often seen as second-class citizens and are not given as much responsibility and importance as men, something which we will see is very applicable to the two social movements being discussed within this thesis. Within these patriarchal societies, women often feel as though they might have more responsibilities than their male counterparts but are not given the same respect and importance (German, 2006).

“Many discussions around gender, feminist theory and sub theories, like that of patriarchy, are grounded or in high relation to Molyneux’s (1985) concept of the practical gendered versus strategic feminist interests” (Shayne, 2004, p.3). Within her theory, she argues that, when women demand more rights or needs, in for example social movements, a distinction relating to those needs must be made. She argues that there is a distinction between women organizing themselves in order to meet basic needs or what she calls practical interests, and women organizing themselves to counter systems of patriarchy, which is what she calls strategic needs (Shayne, 2004, p.3). Practical gender needs relate to basic needs such as shelter, water or work while strategic gender needs are aspects such as the rules promoting inheritance or property, gender violence or any other long-term needs.

### ***3.3 Women in Social Movements***

The list of social movements, such as revolutions or uprisings, which have occurred around the world in the last century, is long. But what about those where women played a

leading role, or movements which were solely feminist in essence? Although movements composed of solely women might be a rarity, women's participation in mixed-gendered movements are not a rarity and women have in the past and present been socially and politically active when it comes to evoking change (Saha, 2015). Although the number of solely female social movements in the past is relatively small, women have nevertheless played a role in a variety of different movements. Gender differences are a crucial aspect when trying to understand how and why women organize and participate in struggles and social movements (Kuumba, 2001, p.14). In many revolutions or uprisings, just as we will see is the case for the First Palestinian *Intifada* and the Lebanese Revolution, women are never just women, they can fight for more rights for them as a group, and join a greater movement, such as a nation-wide revolution (Saha, 2015).

In social movements which are comprised of both men and women, the participation is different for women due to 'gender role expectations' and the responsibilities they have in daily life, such as raising kids or house hold chores (Saha, 2015). Women are often not only part of movements, but are also those ensuring that life goes on and daily tasks are taken care of. Furthermore, the roles of women within a movement may often be different from the roles of men. For example, research has shown that political and social movements which include women are often less violent than those in which men take on leading roles (Hankir, 2018). Decreasing violence is one of the most common roles women play in social movements. In any aspect of a social movement, women are often sidelined; when this is not the case, however, time and time again the correlation between women and non-violence can be seen (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 4). So women are vital to social movements in that they often bring different aspects to the table and give a more peaceful note to such movements.

It must be kept in mind that theories around women in social movements cannot be generalized. In many so-called 'third world' countries, the situation for women is very different from that of their counterparts in so-called 'first world' countries. For example, many women in Arab or African countries enjoy less rights than men, as these countries are often based on a patriarchal structure, a situation the women of such countries are trying to alter (Saha, 2015). "It can be said that the launching of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1975 during the

first World Conference on Women, held in Mexico City, marked the beginning of a global initiative that took more seriously the voices of Third World feminists” (Stephan, 2014, p. 4). Ever since then, women in developing countries have been more present as participants in and organizers of social movements. At this point, I will discuss a variety of social movements in different parts of the world in order to have a better understanding of women in such movements, what they were fighting for and what roles they played.

One example of the involvement of women in a social movement is that of the Iranian revolution of 1979. Although it was an uprising against the regime of men and women alike, women played a vital role within it. “When the combustible material in Iranian society burst into flame in the late 70s, women were on the streets en masse and left a major impact on the revolution, adding a significant impetus to the mass demonstrations leading up to the uprising” (Sheibani, 2009). Women were extremely active and incorporated their own feminist demands into the movement. Women organized events and led demonstrations and, for the first time, felt that, through their involvement, they were a part of the change that was happening and not simply watching from the sidelines (Sheibani, 2009). Although the movement in general was not successful per say, it meant a great deal for the women of Iran, being part of one of the great revolutions of the 20th century (Sheibani, 2009).

The Ukraine provides another example of the involvement of women in social movements. Although women’s involvement and work went largely unrecognized, in 2013 and 2014, they participated in the Maidan protests alongside men (Phillips, 2014, p. 415). Similarly to Iran, the movement was directed against those in power, and women, although not always mentioned, played a huge part. Gender expert Maria Dmitriyeva noted that “women were instrumental in the organization of literally every single aspect of Maidan’s functioning, and they started a lot of initiatives and actively joined initiatives started by men” (Phillips, 2014, p. 415). Although women were often treated differently, even by their male counterparts, and despite the fact that the struggle was of a nationalistic nature, women found ways to incorporate feminist issues in relation to gaining more rights and equality and alter the way their society perceived them (Phillips, 2014, p. 421). Ukrainian women challenged gender stereotypes placed upon them by their society through the participation, organization and

taking on of leading roles in a multitude of different parts of the movement (Phillips, 2014, p. 421).

The social movement in Chile of 2019 was one solely involving women and relating to demands affecting only them as a group. Although feminism in Chile had been gaining strength since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the set of protests discussed here gained a lot of international attention. “In one of these protests, women performed ‘Un violador en tu camino’ or ‘A Rapist in Your Path’ in a demonstration against gender-based violence in front of the National Stadium in Santiago, Chile, in December of 2019. Women performed a choreographed dance, moving side to side and stomping out a rhythm with their feet while chanting powerful lyrics about police violence, gendered violence, the oppression of the state, and the patriarchy” (Willison, 2019). The performance gained world-wide attention and was even picked up by other women in their countries’ social movements. The lyrics explain how the state upholds systematic violations of women’s rights, through institutions such as the judiciary and the police, and how members of these institutions not only ignore women’s testimonies and reports but sometimes themselves are the ones committing the crimes (Willison, 2019). The lyrics chanted by the women involved in the movement painted a vivid picture of them fighting the patriarchy of their system and demanding more equal rights for them and all women of their country and, more specifically, demanded that men involved in any sort of sexual harassment are adequately punished for their acts.

*“Patriarchy is a judge, That judges us for being born, And our punishment, Is the violence you see, It is femicide, It is impunity for my killer, It is disappearances, It is rape, And the blame wasn’t mine, Or where I was, Or how I dressed, The rapist is you (Feministwriter, 2020)”*

The final example of women involved in social movements is that of the ‘Women in Black’ located in Belgrade. The ‘Women in Black’, who have been active for over three decades, have staged hundreds of demonstrations, sit-ins and performances throughout their country, in an environment in which such a thing is not easy (Bilic, 2012, p.607). They have been fighting for the rights of women and other marginalized groups living in Serbia. Through various protests, sit-ins and demonstrations, they have been attempting to obtain more rights within the Serbian society and to break down many patriarchal structures forced onto them by their society (Bilic,

2012). Over the years, their feminist engagement has grown stronger and led to the creation of workshops, public discussions, campaigns and even an SOS hotline aiding female victims of domestic and other types of violence (Bilic, 2012, p.609). The 'Women in Black' not only organized and lead the social movement, they also made sure that women who choose not to go into the streets and who have to fight their own battles behind closed doors are taken care of.

### **3.4 Collective Identity**

"In social movements there are at least three distinct types of identity: personal, social, and collective and although they can overlap, one cannot be inferred from the other" (Snow, 2015). People can have personal and social identities, but a collective identity is formed as a combination of different identities which become one unified entity. Different types of social movements have been, and continue to be, analyzed through the concept of collective identity (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). Throughout the last two centuries, collective identity has been a leading concept when studying social movements and has been an important tool to broaden the horizon of our understanding of these movements. The most prominent and influential theory relating to this concept was put forth by Alberto Melucci in the 1980's, who through his works argues that collective identity is an extremely important term for explaining social movements (Flesher Fominaya, 2010).

"The concept of collective identity, just as the base concept of identity, is rooted in the observation that interactions between two or more sets of actors minimally require that they be situated or placed as social objects and interaction among individuals and groups, as social objects, is contingent on the reciprocal attribution and avowal of identities" (Snow, 2015). Although various definitions of the concept exist, the essence of collective identity is based on the fact that there is a sort of 'one-ness' of a certain group of people, in contrast to the created 'otherness' of another group (Snow, 2015). The collective identity creates a separation of a 'we' versus 'them' and within this 'oneness', a collective agency is created, which creates the action, in this case the social movement (Snow, 2015).

It is not the actors within the collective identity who are of the essence but rather what they can achieve, meaning their actions, or their collective agency (Snow, 2015). "Collective identity is 'an interactive and shared definition' that is evocative of a sense of 'we,' but then highlights the process through which social actors recognize themselves as a collectivity, contending that this process is more vital to conceptualizing collective identity than any resultant product or property" (Snow, 2015). The concept in itself as well as the theory relating to it, put forth by Melucci, portrays how the process of collective identity is a vital aspect of social movements. When individuals come together to form one entity, they can create a social movement through the collective agency. One person by himself can not set forth a movement, or create a 'we' against 'them', only a group of actors coming together can do so.

Melucci's theory explains that collective identity leads to the formation of social movements and, more than that, gives those movements durability and continuity (Fletcher Fominaya, 2010). The formation of such a collective entity can not only lead to the formation of a social movement, but is also a key driver for its continuation and upkeep. "Not only is the product or 'shared we' generative of a sense of agency that can be a powerful impetus to collective action, but it functions, as well, as the orientational identity for other actors within the field of action and more concretely, it is the constructed social object to which the movement's protagonists, adversaries, and audience(s) respond (Hunt et al., 1994), and which, in turn, may have implications for the operation of its organizational carrier, affecting the availability and character of allies, resources, and even tactical possibilities" (Snow, 2015). One could argue that a continual collective identity can be the key to the success of a social movement of any kind (Bilic, 2012, p.607). Through the creation of collective identities, groups can utter their grievances and attempt to create a change, and therefore it is an extremely important concept when studying all types of social movements (Krisie et al, 2004).

#### **4. A History of Modern-day Lebanon**

Prior to discussing the two social movements subject of this thesis, it is important to understand the modern history of both Lebanon and Palestine. Although each nation will be discussed separately, it will become evident that there are some overlapping's and connections of historical events between the two neighbouring countries. In this section, the focus will be on the history of Lebanon, starting with the formation of modern-day Lebanon and its independence, leading up to current times.

At 10,452 km<sup>2</sup> (Najem, 2012, p. 1), Lebanon is one of the smallest countries in the Middle East. Although it is small in size, it is a nation filled with an abundance and variety of culture and history. Lebanon is religiously very complex, comprising the following 18 recognized religious sects: "Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Roman Catholic, Copts, Evangelical Christian, Chaldean Christian, Nestorian Assyrian, Twelvers Shi'a, Sunni, Isma'ili, Druze, Alawite and Jews" (Salamey, 2014, p.27-28). In order to maintain peace between the different sects, all aspects of social and political life are divided along sectarian lines. Lebanon is a democracy, more specifically a consociational democracy, a type of government which is most often found in small countries, where societies are often divided along religious, racial or tribal lines (Salamey, 2014, p.7). Due to this form of government, all the country's political seats are divided along religious lines.

The plethora of different religions and sects living in such a small land has played a vital part in the history of Lebanon, even before its independence. "As an independent political entity, Lebanon is a relatively recent creation, tracing its origins to three distinct historical periods – the 1860s and the establishment of an autonomous Mount Lebanon within the confines of the Ottoman Empire; the 1920s and the creation of Greater Lebanon under French Mandate rule; and the establishment of an independent Lebanese state during the 1940s" (Najem, 2012, p. 1). Since this is not a historical document on Lebanon per say, the focus will be mainly on the historical events that occurred after Lebanon reached independence.

#### ***4.1 Lebanon as an Independent State***

Lebanon is a fairly young nation, whose modern state's borders were defined in 1920, as a product of the Franco-British colonial partition of the whole Middle East. The borders put forth were not too well received by many Lebanese people and intensified the already existing tensions between the various sectarian groups (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 75). Through the partition, France was given the power of a number of countries in the region, including Lebanon. "On May 23, 1926, the first Lebanese constitution was promulgated and Greater Lebanon was transformed into a republic modeled after the French Third Republic" (Salamey, 2014, p.27). Lebanon now included the previous self-directed province of Mount Lebanon, the provinces of North Lebanon, the provinces of South Lebanon and the Biqa Valley (Najem, 2012) . Although France was the indirect ruler and had control over Lebanon, politics and political seats were also assigned to prominent Lebanese families and elites. However, the Lebanese people, especially all non-Christian sects, were keen on ending French influence within their borders and becoming an independent Arab nation.

Although the last remaining French troops withdrew from Lebanon in 1946, it is November 22, 1943 which marks the independence day of the nation (Salamey, 2014, p.29). The foundations of Lebanese independence were established through the National Pact, a document which paved the politics of this new independent state and was signed by France and Lebanon's political and sectarian elite. The National Pact outlines four major principles. First and foremost, it established the power-sharing rules among sects (Traboulsi, 2012, p.111). A 6:5 ratio in favor of Christians was to be maintained within the political and administrative sphere. Furthermore, the three major political posts were to be divided along the lines of the largest and most prominent sects, meaning that the president must always be a Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of parliament a Shi'a Muslim (Salamey, 2014, p.30). Second, Lebanon was given an 'Arab profile', meaning that it should no longer see itself, or be seen, as a state which should be united with Syria, as would be the wish of the Lebanese Muslims, nor as a state connected to and protected by the West, specifically France, as would be the wish of most Lebanese Christians (Traboulsi, 2012, p.111). Lebanon should be seen by the world and by its own people, as an independent Arab nation and function with a minimal

amount of external influence. Third, the Pact stated that “Lebanon shall not be a base or passageway for colonialism” (Traboulsi, 2012, p.111), meaning that history shall not repeat itself in any way and Lebanon should be allowed to make its own political decisions as an independent state. Fourth, the power should no longer be mainly in the hands of the Christians of the country, which was the case under the French rule (Salamey, 2014, p.31). Not only should the three most prominent political roles be divided along sectarian rules, as discussed in the first point, but all spheres of life should give the same opportunities to all religions within Lebanon. Christians, mainly Maronite Christians, should no longer be more privileged at the political, public, cultural or educational levels.

Generally speaking, Lebanon was a rather stable and prosperous state up until the mid-1970s (Najem, 2012). However, images can be deceiving, and, at a closer look, it was very evident that the years after its independence had their fair share of problems and challenges (Traboulsi, 2012, p.112). One of the main problems Lebanon faced shortly after its independence was in relation to the formation of the state of Israel in 1948 (Salamey, 2014, p.32). The Lebanese were politically and militarily involved in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, along with a large number of other Arab states, attempting to free the Palestinian people and hinder the formation of the state of Israel. However, the fight was soon over as Israel won the war. In March 1949, Lebanon and Israel signed an agreement to end the violence and to force all Israeli groups to withdraw from Lebanese territory (Traboulsi, 2012, p.114). This agreement did not halt the problems between the two nations, which became evident in the years to follow. The most immediate repercussion and effect of the formation of Israel on Lebanon was the plethora of Palestinian refugees which poured into Lebanon and into other neighbouring countries, such as Jordan. Tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees, mainly of the Sunni Muslim religion, entered Lebanon, which furthermore altered the religious demographics of the country and increased the already existing religious tensions (Harris, 2012, p.220). On top of altering the Lebanese demographics, thereby intensifying the sectarian problems, the newcomers were also a huge economic and social burden on the country (Traboulsi, 2012, p.114).

Throughout the decades to follow, Lebanon was both faced with internal sectarian problems as well as problems with neighboring countries, mainly Israel. Problems between the

different religious factions and sects were part of the daily agenda. The Lebanese people were divided into those supporting the Palestinian and overall Arab cause, mainly the Muslims, and those feeling nostalgic to the days of French colonialism, mainly the Christians (Salamey, 2014, p.34). In 1967, the situation in Lebanon further deteriorated due to the 1976 Arab-Israeli war, the second wave of Palestinian refugees and the relocation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from Jordan into Lebanon (Salamey, 2014, p.35). It was as though the PLO, under Yaser Arafat, had created a 'state within a state', fighting their war against Israel from within the Lebanese borders (Harris, 2012, p.226). Lebanon was a religious and political chaos, not only facing internal problems, but being used as a hub by a variety of external actors. The divisions among Lebanese continued to grow tremendously to a point where things within this small nation exploded (Salamey, 2014, p.36).

#### ***4.2 The Lebanese Civil War***

In 1975, all hell broke loose in Lebanon. Sectarian, religious, internal and external factors led to the beginning of a brutal and long-lasting 15-year civil war, with the aftermath still being felt today. It all began on April 13, 1975, a day that is marked in the hearts of all Lebanese people. A failed attempt to kill the Christian Phalangist party leader Pierre Gemayel was the spark that ignited the war. The Phalangist party did not stay quiet for long and attacked a bus filled with Palestinian people, believing it was them who had attempted to murder their leader (Salamey, 2014, p.41). More than 20 Palestinians were murdered and the fighting continued over the next few days between the Phalangists on the one side and the Palestinians on the other, but no one would have thought that this would lead to a full-fledged civil war (Salamey, 2014, p.41). Throughout the 15-year long brutal war, over 150,000 people died, a quarter of the Lebanese population was wounded, more than 900,000 people were internally displaced and hundreds of thousands of people fled the country (Salamey, 2014, p.41). Although it was labelled as a civil war, the external parties, mainly Syria, Israel, Russia, the United States and Palestine (PLO), played major roles and exacerbated civilian strife.

It is very hard to explain the Lebanese civil war, as alliances changed quicker than one could keep up with. At the beginning of the civil war, there were three main coalitions, which were each furthermore divided into multiple smaller militia groups. However, it is important to

keep in mind that these were very loose and always changing. The three coalitions were as follows: firstly, the Maronite Lebanese Front led by the Gemayel and Chamoun families; secondly, the PLO led by Yasser Arafat; and thirdly, the Lebanese National Movement, which was an alliance of multiple Sunni and secular militias which were formed under the umbrella of the prominent Druze family of Kamal Jumblatt (Salamey, 2014). Throughout the years, more and more militias joined the war, such as the Iranian-backed group Hezbollah. At the beginning of the war, fighting mainly took place in Beirut, which was quickly divided into the Muslim West under the control of the PLO and the Lebanese National Movement, and the Christian East under the control of the Lebanese Front. Although it all started in the nation's capital, it did not take long for the battles to spread throughout the entire country. To make matters worse, external parties quickly interfered and saw the war as an opportunity to benefit for themselves. At the beginning of the War, the Christian parties were backed monetarily by France and militarily by Syria. After a few years, Israel incorporated itself in the fighting as well, seeing it as an opportunity to decrease the power of the PLO. What made things even more confusing and complex is the fact that, throughout the years of the war, internal and external coalitions and alliances were constantly changing to the point that, at times, it was unclear who was fighting against who (Salamey, 2014, p.47).

Throughout the years, multiple attempts were made to end the violence. National and international parties came together on multiple occasions in hopes of ending the war, but most attempts failed. It seemed almost impossible to bring an end to such a war, seeing as there were so many national problems and tensions between the various religious groups, as well as such a large amount of external involvement, from countries such as Syria and Israel (Salamey, 2014, p.56). In 1989, it seemed as though the war could finally come to an end. The Taif Accord, which was created in 1989, was the document which was able to bring an end to the Lebanese civil war, through a set of plans which were set to change the structure of the government through limiting the sectarian split and by abolishing it in parliament (Khatib & Wallace, 2021). "After 22 days of discussions and consultations between the 62 surviving members of the 1972 parliament, international actors and mediators, an agreement was finally reached on October 22, 1989 to end the civil war" (Salamey, 2014, p.56). This Agreement enabled the base of the

Second Sectarian Republic of Lebanon' and reconfigured the political power-sharing formula within the country. The most important points of the Taif Agreement were as follows: first, Lebanon as an Arab state and as a parliamentary democracy would continue to be the homeland for all its nationals; second, the Maronite Christian president would lose much of his power and would from now on be more of a symbolic figure; third, the ratio of 6:5 in favor of Christians was changed to a ratio of 6:6, meaning that there was a redistribution of important public offices including those of parliament, council of ministers and general directors which would now be evenly divided between Muslims and Christians; four, all external parties, including Syria and France, had to withdraw any remaining troops still present within Lebanon; five, all Lebanese militias were to be disarmed immediately, except Hezbollah as they were to remain armed as a 'resistance force' protecting the south of Lebanon from Israel (Salamey, 2014, p.57). New elections were soon to be held and it seemed as though Lebanon was finally recovering and moving on from the destruction of the war; however, beneath the cracks, it was evident that the social and political divisions that were the cause of the war remained largely unresolved.

#### ***4.3 Post Civil War Lebanon***

Although the war had come to an end in 1990, through the Taif Agreement, political problems prevailed in Lebanon. Although the removal of all external parties was part of the agreement, Syrian involvement within the country remained as well as sporadic problems with Israel. In 2005, the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al Hariri was assassinated with multiple members of his security staff; and it was only then that the remaining Syrian troops left Lebanon (Khatib, 2021). Not only were external parties continuously the root of problems, but so were the different national religious and sectarian parties residing within the country. At this point, Lebanon was strongly divided into two main alliances, namely, March 8 and March 14. "The pro Syrian March 8 movement contained a multitude of political parties, the most Prominent being the Shi'a group Hezbollah led by Hassan Nasrallah, the Shi'a Amal movement led by Nabih Berri and the Christian Free Patriotic Movement led by Michel Aoun" (Salamey, 2014). On the other hand, the pro-Western March 14 alliance contained important parties, including the Druze Progressive Socialist Party led by Kamal Jumblatt, the Future movement led by Saad Hariri and

the Christian Kataeb Party led by Samir Geagea (Salamey, 2014). Although these two alliances were against each other on the political sphere, behind the scene, alliances were as loose as they had been in the civil war (Khatib, 2021).

In 2006, Lebanon once again was faced with war, this time, however, not one civil in nature. Due to the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah, a one month long 'war' broke out in July 2006 between the two parties (Salamey, 2014, p.68). Although fighting did not last long, more than 1,000 Lebanese people, mainly in the South of the country, lost their lives, and the country was faced with huge economic and financial setbacks. This war only increased political and sectarian tensions within the country as Hezbollah, with its own weapons and army, fought a war many Lebanese parties did not want to be part of. Due to the involvement of the United Nations and the formation of a United Nations resolution which both Israel and Lebanon signed, fighting came to an end on August 11, 2006 (Salamey, p.69).

Once more, in 2008, Lebanese citizens feared for their lives, with yet another set of fighting, however, this time with no external party involved. Although it was stated in the United Nations resolution, which had ended the 2006 war against Israel, that no group beside the Lebanese army should be armed, Hezbollah did not give up its weapons. "This and other political decisions, such as a decree to investigate further into the Hezbollah party, led to tensions and violent outbreaks between the two March alliances" (Salamey, p.70). On May 8, 2008, heavy battles in mixed Sunni and Shi'a neighbourhoods broke out, which soon spread to other parts of the country. In response, Lebanese political parties and external parties, such as Syria and Iran, flew to Qatar in order to end the violence and create a new Government agreed upon by all sides. On May 21, 2008, the Doha Agreement was signed and included the following five vital points: first, the president must from now on be appointed by consensus rather than by election; second, the council of ministers made up of 30 seats would be divided with 16 seats allocated for the majority, which was the March 14 alliance, 11 for the March 8 alliance and 3 for the president; third, any future parliamentary elections must be held on the basis of the 1960 Electoral Law, meaning that smaller voting constituencies were institutionalized in electoral redistricting, in hopes of being more fair towards all religions and sects; fourth, both March 8 and 14 agreed to attempt solving any future problems with words rather than with the

use of violence; and fifth, all parties involved promised to refrain from using weapons and to promote one unified Lebanese national identity (Salamey, 2014, p.74-75). Although the Doha Agreement ended the violence and tensions for the moment, its outcome was a political system which was based even more on religion and sectarianism. The fact that the various Lebanese parties could not resolve the issues on their own, but rather had to be removed from the situation and had to be mediated by multiple external parties, could point at the fact that the issues were only solved at the surface and not from the roots. Although the National Pact and the Doha Agreement were both created in order to solve the Lebanese political issues by giving all sects political and social representation, they also increased the religious and sectarian divide within the country (Salamey, 2014)

#### ***4.4 Lebanon Today***

“The modern day Lebanese constitution declares that Lebanon is a parliamentary democracy within the context of sectarian consociationalism, in which the highest offices are proportionately reserved for sectarian representation” (Salamey, 2014, p.85). Furthermore, the constitution states that there must be a separation of power, limited presidential terms, and fair elections in order to attempt to maintain peace within the country (Salamey, 2014, p.85). Its political system is based on the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers (Presidency of the Council of Ministers). The executive branch consists of the Council of up to thirty ministers, the legislative branch consists of a single-chamber parliament of 128 members, and the judicial branch consists of a court system with the following three parts: one administrative court, one state council court and a number of judicial courts (Presidency of the Council of Ministers). These three branches are, in return, heavily based on religion, and here as well, seats are divided along sectarian lines. Lebanon is based on respect for public liberties, especially the freedom of opinion and belief, and respect for social justice and equality of rights and duties among all citizens without discrimination. (Presidency of the Council of Ministers). This might be the image the Lebanese governmental institutions want to portray to the world, but as we will see later on within this thesis, looks can be deceiving and between the cracks much of this so-called democracy, freedom and equality of all citizens can be highly contested.

Although Lebanon has been spared from any sort of war or long-lasting period of violence within the years to following the Doha Agreement, it can by no means be dubbed a socially, politically and economically stable country (Salamey, 2014). The fact that the warlords of the civil war, or their descendants, are the politicians ruling the country today says a lot about the country's political state. Lebanon's modern politics are characterized by corruption, sectarianism and a continuing direct and indirect interference from neighbouring states such as Israel, Syria and Iran (Khatib & Wallace, 2021). Although Syrian and Israeli troops might have left Lebanon for the most part a long time ago, their presence is still felt to date. Not only has the long-lasting Syrian civil war been a tremendous financial and economic burden on the already fragile country, but various Lebanese factions are still politically connected to the country, as well as to other countries. "Religion still plays a crucial role in Lebanon's politics and is a major factor in the international alliances the various parties form" (Khatib & Wallace, 2021). Due to their common religion, Shi'a Islam, Hezbollah has strong ties with the Syrian regime and Iran. On the other side, the Sunni parties of Lebanon, such as the Future Movement, have strong ties with Saudi Arabia. The various Christian parties have strong ties to the West, specifically France, and continue to be reminiscent of the days when France had a strong influence over their country (Salamey, 2014).

Although Lebanon wants to be seen as a functioning democratic state, the constant involvement of external factors and the high presence of religion in all spheres of life make it hard for the country to move forward. The politicians in the country have created a state of dependency, through which they continue to ensure their power (Khatib, 2021). As the state as an entity does little for its citizens, each political party has an abundance of supporters from the same religion. Without the support from political parties, many people in Lebanon would have even more financial, social and economic problems. "This patronage system has allowed the war lords of the civil war to stay in power for decades, as they have financially and socially made people dependant on them" (Salamey, 2014). For example, a big part of the country's Sunni Muslims has continued to follow the Hariri family, as they have been socially and monetarily rewarded for their support. The same can be said for other political parties. However, more and more Lebanese people are waking up and are realizing that they deserve more. They are aware

of the fact that the taxes they are paying are not being used for what has been promised to them and therefore are no longer willing to be a part of the country's corrupt system (Khatbi, 2021). They are realizing that they deserve more. Lebanon has been a boiling pot and eventually the time came for it to explode.

## **5. The Lebanese Revolution**

The problems which led to the 2019 uprising are manifold. Problems in Lebanon are political, economic and environmental in nature, and all three types will be discussed in order to gain a better understanding of the causes of the revolution (WILPF, 2019).

### ***5.1 Tensions Building Up***

Politically speaking, corruption and sectarianism amongst the ruling elites are part of the daily agenda, and it has been many years since the country has seen a properly functioning central government. The majority of the Lebanese people have had enough of the political system which is based on nepotism and sectarian identities (WILPF, 2019). Lebanon has seen years of a non-functioning, at times even non existing government, which has led the country into a state of chaos. Although Lebanon might be a democracy on paper, the corrupt and highly sectarian political system has ignored the citizen's needs for way too long (Lamirande, 2020). Politicians worry less about the welfare of their citizens and more about their own agendas.

"Furthermore, in Lebanon, the sectarian power-sharing arrangement as a rentier system, in which power and wealth are divided and monopolized according to criteria have nothing to do with the competence or capability of its politicians" (The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2019, p. 3). Politicians are not leading the country because they are the most capable for the various positions, but rather because of their religions and sectarian ties. As the president, for example, must be a Maronite Christian, the Lebanese citizens could not vote for a Sunni candidate even if they see him more fit for the position. Not only is the religious division of political posts a problem, but also the fact that political success is impossible without the right ties or affiliation to a political party. The dependency on religion, sectarianism and nepotism as well as the continuing external influences have left Lebanon in a state of chaos (Salamey, 2014).

Prior to the revolution, the country was heavily indebted. "According to the Central Intelligence Agency 2017, Lebanon ranked the 3rd highest country with Debt to GDP ratio as it recorded 152.8%, this ratio compares country's public debt to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP)" (Youssef, 2020, p. 1). The aftermath of the civil war was still felt in the economic, political

and social sphere. In order to rebuild the country after the end of the Civil War, politicians, such as Rafiq al Hariri, indebted the country heavily (Lamirande, 2020). These attempts were often seen as catering to the elites by reconstructing the capital's city center and creating shops and sky scrapers, which the majority of the population could by no means afford, bearing in mind that more than a quarter of the Lebanese population lived in poverty (WILPF, 2019). A large amount of the Lebanese people survives due to the remittances sent from Lebanese living abroad, in countries all around the world. Many people who left throughout the civil war or throughout the last few decades, are often the ones keeping the Lebanese people afloat, with remittances reaching as high as 25 per cent of the country's overall GDP (Youssef, 2020, p. 2).

Uncontrollable spending, piling debts and the monetary corruption of the political elites have only worsened the economic situation within Lebanon. The Lebanese economic sector is highly privatized, and huge parts of it are owned by the politicians themselves, or business men with close ties to their respective sectarian leaders, who have been in charge since the days of the civil war (Geha, 2020, p. 3). Privatization and corruption have led to the downfall of the economy, and Lebanon is undoubtedly in the middle of an economic recession and a currency crisis which will furthermore increase the inflation rate and the poverty within the country (SOCIAL WATCH, 2019). People who had already been living on a day-to-day basis have been only falling further down the poverty line. The Lebanese lira, which is pegged to the US dollar, has been losing its purchasing power over the last few years, and the situation is only getting worse. People who are earning in Lebanese lira have lost most of their purchasing power and are not able to cover even their most basic needs. The local currency has lost most of its value. The rate which used to be 1 US dollar to 1,500 Lebanese lira has skyrocketed and has been fluctuating, reaching as high as 40,000 black market rate. The local currency's value has dropped to more than 80 per cent on the black market, fuelling inflation. The Lebanese people have lost immense amounts in savings and, according to the World Bank figures of 2020, more than half of the population has fallen below the poverty line (International Crisis Group, 2021). Prior to the revolution, inflation was disastrous, but is incomparable to what it is today. The financial crisis in Lebanon is getting worse by the day, and the Government continuous to show incompetence in addressing the country's issues pertaining from shortages in gas to the lack of

bread, all occurring due to the US-dollar liquidity problem and high inflation rate (WILPF, 2020). Not only are the Lebanese people dealing with the inflation and accompanying problems, but also with the cutting of salaries, as some businesses are not able to pay their workers (Lebanese Opportunity, 2019). This economic situation has made the rich, who often earn in dollars, even richer, while the poor have been falling further down the ladder.

Not only were economic and political problems the cause of the uprising but so were environmental ones. A few years prior to the revolution, the country faced one of the worst rubbish crises the world has ever seen (WILPF, 2019). Lebanon has had problems with the disposal of trash for a long time; however, throughout the years leading up to the revolution, matters were only worsening. The streets of Beirut, and many other cities, were full of trash, with garbage piling up in every corner and the smell becoming unbearable, especially throughout the hot summer months. The trash was not only polluting the streets but also Lebanon's beautiful and diverse nature, with the forests, rivers and seas filling with plastic and other waste (WILPF, 2019). Lebanon had always had problems with its garbage, the disposal of it and the pollution it causes, but it reached a new level in the years prior to the revolution.

Another environmental issue which led to the Revolution were wildfires, which occurred in October 2019 (Lamirande, 2020). Due to climate change, leading to the alteration of temperatures, wildfires have been occurring more frequently around the world, with Lebanon not being spared. However, most countries are equipped to deescalate the situation and minimize damage, something which cannot be said for Lebanon. On Sunday, October 13, 2019, wildfires broke out in multiple parts of Lebanon and lasted for a few days (American University of Beirut, 2019). Once again, the Lebanese people could not depend on their Government to assist them, as the machinery which was meant to aid in such situations had not been looked after; once again, the Lebanese people were left to fend for themselves. During October 13-15, there were more than 100 wildfires, leading to an huge amount of damage to both private and public property, the burning of hundreds of hectares of green land and the death of one person (American University of Beirut, 2019). While the Lebanese people were suffering, the politicians were sitting in their villas, penthouses and even castles, not doing anything to deescalate the situation or aid their citizens.

“Shortly after the wildfires, the government proposed new taxes on calls made through services like WhatsApp, which many Lebanese use to avoid the high costs of local text messaging and cellular services, as well as taxes on tobacco and gasoline. This was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Tired of seeing their tax dollars fill the pockets of politicians without any improvement to their lives, working-class people flooded the streets in the first night of civil unrest” (Lamirande, 2020).

*“People I think have been fed up for a while with this country and its politicians. The cherry on top was the WhatsApp tax of six dollars. But many things led to the protests, the tax was just the final straw. The stealing, sectarianism, the lack of laws and so on all added up and has been boiling for a while. And these six dollars are a lot you know, so many people don’t have that money to pay and especially because the phones are already so expensive and WhatsApp was the thing they could do for free” (Interviewee 1).*

According to the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, four major factors underlying the protests and the revolution can be pointed out, the first of which is the fall of the Taif System. The current Lebanese political system is the product of multiple international and regional settlements whose key purpose was to end the civil war. It was imposed on the Lebanese people by outside actors, such as Syria and Saudi Arabia, with the small involvement of the Lebanese elite. The second factor is the decline of the Sunni- Shi’a opposition. In 2014, former enemies, the Future Movement and Hezbollah ended their hostilities and formed a very strong alliance, which could become very dangerous for the people and the country as a whole. The third factor are the ongoing sectarian problems within the country. The whole country is divided along sectarian lines, and wealth and power are not distributed according to capabilities but rather according to wealth and power. The fourth factor is the unjust distribution of wealth. The class division is one of the most important factors which sparked the revolution, as a small part of the country holds most of the country’s wealth and the majority are left with near to nothing (The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2019, p. 3). Whatever the reasons might have been, people come to realize that, unless they join forces and take matters into their own hands, no change would ever happen.

## **5.2 The Revolution**

Everything started on Thursday, October 17, 2019. People were no longer willing to sit around waiting for change, but took to the streets to ensure that change would happen. It was not the taxes, or any other such aspect which ignited the revolution, but rather the complete lack of empathy by the Government (Moukaddem, 2020). It would be unreasonable to believe that taxes were the only ignitor of such an uprising, but rather the decades of misery caused by politicians who did not seem to care about the well-being of their general population.

*“I believe the reason wasn’t only the WhatsApp tax, it was more an awakening. The Lebanese realized that they could unite and that they had a voice and that change could occur. As if they were in a deep long sleep and it suddenly came to them. The tax was a catalyst; it was not the reason but it was what sparked it” (Interviewee 3).*

Not only Beirut saw thousands, at times hundreds of thousands of people, flooding the streets to protest against their corrupt politicians and put an end to their misery, but cities all around the country, including Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre, saw such protests as well (Social Watch, 2019). “The protests were motivated and rooted in a structurally flawed economic, political and social system embraced by the corrupt successive governments for decades” (Social Watch, 2019). The protests were mainly held in the centers of the various cities. Beirut’s protests, which saw the largest number of participants, were mainly held in the city’s downtown area in its famous Martyr square and the streets engulfing the Lebanese parliament. People from all around the country drove to the capital and joined the mass movement and what started as a few protests quickly turned into a nation-wide revolution (Zrein, 2020, p. 61). Although the movement was by the people for the people, without much leadership, some sort of organization and leading figures were essential if the movement was to be successful and long-lasting (Zrein, 2020, p. 61). To fill this gap, groups of professional people, including university professors, journalists, engineers and doctors, started organizing themselves and coordinating parts of the movement (Social Watch, 2019). However, what made this revolution so widespread and unique was the fact that not only the educated took on leading positions, but rather people across all economic and social spheres played important roles within the movement.

Over the course of months, a multitude of people took part in the movement. Protestors stayed on the streets for weeks and months to ensure their voices were being heard. In Martyr square, Beirut, a village erupted with people camping out, cooking food and creating a sort of home for those not willing to return to theirs until they were seen and heard by their corrupt politicians. Maybe one of the most striking aspects of this revolution was that the protesters came together from all different social classes, religions, ages and political backgrounds. They placed their political, social and religious aspects aside and united as one, to put an end to the misery they had been living in for as far as they could remember (Shahoud et al., 2020, p. 3). What the Lebanese revolution truly did was putting aside the sectarian issues and opening up new possibilities for the nation and all those living in it (Lamirande, 2020).

“What the politicians failed to realize is that for once, protestors have shared a clear vision with clear demands regarding the political and economic systems they wanted to achieve for the future: government resignation, formation of a new one that comprises independent people from the ruling parties, and holding democratic parliamentary elections based on a new democratic electoral law” (SOCIAL WATCH, 2019). People were united and had, for the most part, the same goal in sight. A ‘national collective identity’ was created, made up of a large part of the Lebanese population. This collective identity led to collective agency which allowed for the movement to be created and was the leading factor for its momentum. People were no longer scared; they had realized that they had nothing more to fear because they had nothing left to lose. The people who took to the streets, were no longer afraid and broke taboos by naming and shaming all politicians for what they had done to the Lebanese people for decades. The Lebanese people did not want money or riches, they simply wanted the basic human rights which all people around the world should be entitled to. They wanted a fair, just and safe Lebanon for them to raise their children in. The protests were for basic rights, for the right to water, public health, transportation, electricity and, most importantly, social justice (Moukaddem, 2020). People realized that these basic rights would never be given to them as long as the same corrupt rulers continued to rule over them.

“The people in the street were united by a general mood and a collective identity, seeking to topple the ruling political class and leave behind the system of sectarian power-

sharing and the parcelling out of government offices and public resources that has operated in the country since the proclamation of the National Pact in 1943” (The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2019, p. 1). The protesters demanded an end to a political system which was, and continuous to be, so heavily dependant on sectarianism and corruption (Ismail, 2020). What the people demanded was a political reform with new, young and non-religiously affiliated leaders, who would invoke real change for the country and grant people the rights which they deserve. As the women I interviewed said, the people on the streets were very vocal about their demand of the resignation of the government with various slogans being shouted in the squares across the country, including the two most famous ones: ‘The people want the downfall of the regime’ and ‘All of them means all of them’ (Interviewee 2).

After only a few days of protests, one of their demands was met when the then prime minister, Saad Hariri, resigned from the Government (Shahoud et al., 2020, p. 3). This was only a small victory and did not stop the movement but rather encouraged people to continue. Only 12 days after the beginning of the revolution, the entire Lebanese Government resigned, marking an important step for all those part of the movement (SOCIAL WATCH, 2019). People were hopeful; for the first time in a long time, people felt as though, united, finally all hand in hand, as one collective identity, change was happening and their hard work was finally paying off. However, the problem which prevailed was that not all of the Lebanese people were united in their cause and part of the ‘national collective identity’. Many civilians were still devoted and loyal to their respective political figures and the army, which stood on the side of the politicians, protecting them from the protestors. “However, despite the guarantees of freedom of expression stated in Lebanon’s constitution, Article 384 of the penal code punishes with imprisonment individuals from six months to two years for insulting the president, flag, or national emblem, which obviously silences any criticism or opposition” (Social Watch, 2019). People were naming and shaming a plethora of politicians, and thugs loyal to them did not take such insults lightly. This led to multiple human rights violations against the protestors and the eruption of violence enforced on the protestors by those still loyal to the political leaders (SOCIAL WATCH, 2019). At one point, a group of Shi’a Hezbollah and Amal supporters entered Martyr Square who not only started beating the protestors but also vandalizing their tents and

art work (Social Watch, 2019). By the time the army came between the two opposing groups, a lot of damage had already been done and the fear of yet a new civil war started to grow in the hearts of the Lebanese people.

This section attempted to outline and explain the 2019 Lebanese Revolution by focusing on the reasons for such a revolution while explaining the movement. At this point, the focus must be put on a specific group of individuals which played an immense part in the movement; a group of people who raised their voices and demanded their rights, rights which had been denied them for far too long. Without the involvement of these individuals, the revolution might have not been the same. The protestors might have been fighting for a common cause, but this particular group was fighting for more.

## **6. Women of the Lebanese Revolution**

In this section, I will discuss the involvement and roles of women in the 2019 Lebanese Revolution. Prior to doing so, however, it is important to explain women's status in Lebanese society in order to paint a better picture as to why women felt the need to join the uprising and create a collective identity of their own. Not only did they fight for their nation and for all the people living in it, but also did they stand up for their rights as a marginalized group living in a patriarchal society. In this section, I will shed more light on the notion of the double collective identity, and it will become evident that Lebanese women were both part of the 'national collective identity' as well as the 'female collective identity'. Furthermore, I will discuss previous Lebanese feminist movements happening in the past, as it is important to understand that women have been trying to gain more rights but at the same time to grasp how vital the 2019 Revolution was in their struggle.

### **6.1 *Women in Lebanese Society***

"Since Lebanon's independence in 1943, women have been struggling to shatter the glass ceiling denying them equal rights" (Abou-Zahr, 2020). Lebanon, like many of its neighbouring countries, is characterized by a patriarchal society, with men having the upper hand in most parts of life. Waves of feminist movements have been part of Lebanese history; however, it has been hard for women to achieve change due to the strong patriarchal structures of the country which are highly discriminatory against women (Lamirande, 2020). Women are often seen as second-class citizens in both the private and the public sphere.

Although many Lebanese lack basic rights, such as water or electricity, the situation is even more dire for women. "The country is ranked 140 out of 149 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gender Gap report, which measures gender parity in the economy, education, health and politics" (Hall, 2019). Such statistics are the proof that women are not treated the same as men within the country. In multiple aspects of life, women are inferior to their fathers, sons and brothers and struggle on a daily basis with the Lebanese patriarchal system. Ironically, Lebanon is known in the region for being a pioneer when it comes

to women's freedom; however, this is just because they have more freedom in banal aspects such as the way they dress (Abou-Zahr, 2020). They might dress more freely, or be able to drink, drive and enjoy other such freedoms, but that is as far as it goes. The sad truth is that women are still seen as inferior in society and in the political sphere. When it comes to their strategic needs, most of them are not met.

Within Lebanese society, women are often seen as inferior by their male counterparts. As soon as they are born, they are often treated differently than their brothers in many families. In Arab society in general, prior to marriage, women are under the 'rule' of their fathers and brothers. Once they are married, this power is given to their husbands. However, this should by no means imply that all Lebanese male figures treat their wives, sisters or daughters with violence or aggression but rather, that they are often not treated equally compared to their male counterparts and might not enjoy as many freedoms. For the most part, Lebanese women are the ones dealing with all aspects relating to the upbringing of children and housework, labor which is often unrecognized by the men in their family and society in general and is rather seen as their duty (Salameh, 2014, p. 5). It is, so to say, a given that women take care of the children and the house, and this work is not necessarily given the gratitude it deserves. Much of the domestic work still lies on the shoulders of women, even if they are part of the work force, with labor statistics showing that most women in Lebanon are not economically active (Salameh, 2014, p. 4). This could have a multitude of reasons, including the following: they are not allowed to work; they have no need to work; or they are not willing to work because, no matter what their job is, they will very likely be paid less than a man doing the same work (up to 27 per cent less) (Salameh, 2014, p. 8); and maternal rights in Lebanon are insufficient. The country has one of the worst maternity leave allowances in the world, often forcing women to stay home and raise their children, even when they would be willing and able to join the work force (Zrein, 2020, p. 65).

Female representation in politics is low, and only few women hold governmental posts. "At the time of the revolution, Lebanon had only six women lawmakers in its 128-seat parliament, and women were underrepresented in key areas of the workforce such as science, technology and engineering" (Hall, 2019). Most of the higher political and economic positions

are held by men and, without much representation, change in their favor is very unlikely to occur. To put things into perspective, a few years ago, Lebanon saw its first minister of women affairs, something which might be seen as a step in the right direction for women's rights in Lebanon; however, the position was given to a man, and women quickly realized that not much would be done in their favor (Geha, 2020, p. 4).

The main challenge facing Lebanon is that everything is decided in accordance with religion. "The system regulating private and public life (such as marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance) in Lebanon is not governed by a unified civil code; instead it is based on 15 different legal systems. This has a disproportionate impact on women and girls from all religious sects because these laws favor men and don't give equal rights to women" (WILPF, 2019). Decisions on women matters in Lebanon are not taken by one unifying entity, but according to what sect or religion the woman belongs to, leading to even more injustice against women (Salameh, 2014, p. 3) Furthermore, decisions depend on the judge or religious figure dealing with the specific issue or case. Due to the Lebanese constitution and the all-encompassing focus on religion, men are the head of the family and women continue to be inferior under Lebanese law (Salameh, 2014, p. 2). Many discriminating laws are enshrined in the constitution, furthermore enhanced by the traditional approach of religious courts.

Although some reforms have occurred recently in favor of women, the country's legal system continues to be heavily discriminatory against them (Hall, 2019). One of the most contended injustices affecting women in the country is a law that prohibits Lebanese women from passing on their nationality to their spouse or children. One of the most common arguments political figures use in order to justify this law is that they do not want the sectarian balance of the country to change (Lamirande, 2020). I would like to illustrate this point through the case of Palestinian refugees. In Lebanon, the number of Palestinians refugees is high, and most are Sunni Muslim. It is only natural that, over the course of time, Lebanese women have married Palestinian men and have had children together. Since children automatically take over the religion of the father, all children of these mixed marriages would be Sunni Muslim. If these children were to be given the Lebanese nationality, the sectarian balance would be altered and

Sunni Muslims might become the religious majority in the country. Again, it is a sectarian issue that forbids women from passing on their nationality to their children.

“Although Lebanon is considered more progressive than its neighbors, women still face a raft of laws that discriminate with protections against marital rape, rape, sexual harassment and abuse are either non-existent or weak” (Safi, 2019). It might be hard to imagine that such discriminatory laws on such a sensitive topic prevail even until today and are only slowly reformed. As example, I would like to point out a law that existed in Lebanon until 2017, a law which allowed rapists to remain free if they promised to marry their victims (Elbasnaly & Knipp, 2019). Although it is a relief that this particular law is no longer in power, other highly discriminatory laws prevail such as a law regulating marital infidelity. Logically, the blame should be put on both the female and male party within the equation; however, in Lebanon, only the women are considered guilty (Salameh, 2014, p. 4). In other words, men will never be legally punished for betraying their wives while women are punished for their actions, even if they are forced into committing adultery. “Furthermore, religious courts share a history of humiliating divorced women and denying them custody of minor children with several mothers having been imprisoned for refusing to give up on their sons and daughters” (Abou-Zahr, 2020). A woman does not even have the basic right of seeing her child after a certain age if the judge, who in most cases favors the fathers, decides against it. Another discriminatory law relating to women regulates abortion, which is stated as a punishable crime according to an Article in the constitution (Salameh, 2014, p.3). If a woman is raped or forced by her husband to have sexual intercourse, and gets pregnant as the result of such a violent act, she has no right over her own body and is forbidden by the law to abort the child.

## ***6.2 Lebanese Feminist Movements Prior to the Revolution***

Prior to discussing the actual roles and demands of women in the 2019 Lebanese Revolution, it is important for me to outline earlier efforts of women to change their position in society. Although prior to this movement not much has been effectively done to change the role of women within the patriarchal Lebanese society, it must be acknowledged that attempts have been made.

In her paper, Rita Stephan outlines four waves of feminism which happened in Lebanese history from the early 1900s until today. Although the four waves might have not led to achieving gender equality within the nation, feminist movements in Lebanon did take place, and it is important to mention them and to give them the importance they deserve. It was in the 1920s that Lebanese feminism emerged (Stephan, 2014, p. 2). “This, first wave of feminism found its supporters and creators among a level of elite women and men who were dedicated to a public life of charitable activism, part of which concerned the education of women and the improvement of their roles as mothers and their status within society” (Stephan, 2014, p. 2). Among this wave, much focus was put on creating organizations which would aid women, often from lower social classes, in aspects such as education. The second wave of Lebanese feminism came hand in hand with Lebanese independence in 1947, when two major women’s advocacy groups were formed in Lebanon (Stephan, 2014, p. 3). These groups were hopeful that this new chapter in Lebanese history would allow women to move forward and obtain more rights. In the 1970s, the third wave emerged. “This era marked the beginning of a global feminist initiative that took more seriously the voices of the ‘Third World’ through the launching of the United Nations’ Decade for Women in 1975 during the first World Conference on Women” (Stephan, 2014, p. 4). It was a new glimpse of hope that their cause was getting international attention and support. However, with the outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon, which dominated life in the country for the next 15 years, women organizations were forced to focus less on their cause and more on the dire situation of their country. Their focus was now turned towards aiding the vulnerable, emotionally and physically in desperate need of attention. At the end of the Civil War, Lebanon was pressured by international organizations to collaborate with women organizations in order to provide social welfare services and improve the gender relations within the country (Stephan, 2014, p. 4).

From the early 1990s, Lebanon used the World Conference for Women in Beijing to establish very elaborate State-led mechanisms which were working towards more gender equality (Salameh, 2014, p.9). Since Lebanon partook in the Conference, its civil society organizations and feminist groups felt pushed to increase their representation and voices in the decision-making spheres. Women were hopeful once more, believing change was going to

happen and this time in their favour. The fourth, and final wave of feminism emerged in the early 2000s. “The uneasy balance of power in Lebanon between Syrian troops and its allies, and the Lebanese forces was overturned in favor of the Lebanese due to, what became known as the, Spring Revolution or the Cedar Revolution” (Stephan, 2014, p. 6). Women were at the forefront of the revolution, which sought to expel the last remaining physical Syrian influence within the Lebanese borders. Women were highly present in these protests and, through their presence, added a feminist touch to the movement (Stephan, 2014, p. 6). This time around, the immense use of violence against women in the domestic sphere was at the top of the list for women’s organizations. This cause continued to prevail in the feministic agenda of Lebanon. In protests in 2014, which attracted thousands of people, women demanded the enforcement of a law to protect them from violence, specifically domestic violence (Salameh, 2014, p. 13).

Although feminism and the fight for women’s rights has been a part of Lebanon’s modern history, not much change has been seen. “Years after Beijing and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996 (Salameh, 2014, p. 2) and with even more elaborate international schemes such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it seems, in fact, impossible to convince Lebanese men to give up power, to anyone at all, let alone to women” (Geha, 2020, p. 2). With the patriarchal roots dug so deep within all spheres of Lebanese life, it has become evident that it will be very hard for change to come about and for women to have more rights, at least in the near future. The change which has thus far happened in Lebanon is only small, and much work still has to be done (Stephan, 2014, p. 7). The small steps which could be achieved have been constantly interrupted by other aspects such as the Lebanese Civil War or external interferences. In the bigger picture, not much has changed for women in Lebanon. Yet, and despite previous frustration, in 2019, women were ready. They were ready for change, real change. They were determined to scream even louder, fight even harder, and try with all their power to change their roles in Lebanese society.

### **6.3 Women Partaking in the Revolution**

Although Lebanese women have been visible in previous political movements in the country, they were especially active and present in the 2019 Revolution (SOCIAL WATCH, 2019). The revolution, which started on October 17, was filled with women, standing side by side with their fellow male protestors. Although all the women which I interviewed for this thesis agree that the revolution cannot be labeled as a woman, they also agree that women played a huge role within the movement and were a vital part of it.

*“I mean here you start to question what is woman, what is man. But I mean definitely the women were at the front lines of the revolution, kind of really outspoken. But I mean I do not know if I can say if the revolution was a woman, it was however very kind this time around, did not want violence, wanted to educate, speak, let people understand and really believe in this cause. And I mean those aspects for me do seem very female but I could never say it is just a woman because it was possible only by the help of both women and men” (Interviewee 4).*

What the Lebanese Revolution has come to be known for is that it was filled with youth and women (Sfeir, 2020, p. 4). “According to the United Nations analysis from the first week of the protests, it suggests that women were at least half of the protest population” (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 6). In all parts of Lebanon, women filled the streets and played a huge role in the protests which aimed to shift the direction their country was heading towards. Although many documents I have found relating to this movement have all focused on the fact that women have played such a huge role, this comes as no surprise to me, knowing that women have been demanding change and more rights for years (WILPF, 2019). Not only was the number of women on the streets unexpectedly high, but the huge variety of women was noticeable as well. All different types of women were at the frontlines: “young, old, on wheel chairs, veiled, in miniskirts, students, teachers, feminist activists, lawyers, doctors, journalists, artists, mothers and grandmothers” (Abou-Zahr, 2020). It was not only the young or the more liberal women taking part, but women from all spheres of life, standing side by side and fighting for their country and their future. Many protestors wore headscarves, and many did not. The diversity of the women present in the movement is not surprising for a country such as Lebanon, which is known for its variety and the fact that people of so many different religions live side by side.

This diversity was seen both negatively and positively by internal and external actors and observers. At the international level, it was often seen as a beautiful thing that Lebanese women were so diverse and free to go to the streets dressed as they pleased. Yet, other voices could be heard, criticizing the provocative outfits of some Lebanese women and belittling them for it. An article, which was published in a Saudi Arabian newspaper, reporting on the Lebanese Revolution was headlined "Lebanese Beauties: All of These Wonderful Women Are Revolutionaries" (Elbasnaly & Knipp, 2019). The article showed mainly 'beautiful' woman, wearing short dresses, skirts and shorts, portraying them as objects making the revolution more 'beautiful', rather than showing them as strong individuals fighting for change.

Although the road towards change has never been an easy one, the revolution has had dramatic effects on women as they have been an integral part of it since day one (Safi, 2019). They found their place from the start and made sure their voices were heard loud and clear throughout the streets of Lebanon. "The revolution – and I insist it is a revolution – which started on 17 October transformed the way women participate in politics and public life. Because the revolution was leaderless and genuine, women could play a leading role in its tactics, narratives, and direction" (Geha, 2020, p. 4). Women had the opportunity to engulf themselves in the revolution and fight for change for both their country as well as for their rights as women. Undoubtedly, the majority of the Lebanese people have been robbed of so many of their rights, woman have been even more affected and marginalized under the Lebanese State and are the ones most in need of change (Geha, 2020, p. 5). They no longer want to be spectators but take matters into their own hands and bring an end to the patriarchal structures they have been governed by for decades (Eid, 2020).

Some might say that women should have spoken up sooner, and although they did in certain occasions, shattering the patriarchal ceiling placed upon them is not an easy thing to do (Moukaddem, 2020). The right time has come, the time for them to fight for change, the right time to add 'women' to the Lebanese national anthem (Humran, 2020, p. 31). Although it will by no means be an easy fight and no matter what the result might be, what women gained from the revolution is the fact that they made themselves visible (Zrein, 2020, p. 65). It is a fight they must partake in if they want to see change; and if they want their demands to be met, their

presence is of utter importance. Women have been at the forefront of the movement since its onset, and although merely small victories might have been achieved at the beginning of the Revolution, women are not willing to back down (Safi, 2019).

#### **6.4 Women and their Demands**

It can be argued that women had a multitude of reasons, relating to the patrilineal and patriarchal Lebanese structures, as to why they joined and even led the protests (Lamirande, 2020). “They were there fighting hand in hand with their fellow male protestors for their basic rights. For simple rights such as water and electricity. Protesters have repeatedly characterised their demands as nothing more than a fulfilment of their basic rights as citizens. But for women in Lebanon, those rights are fewer still” (Hall, 2019). Women, just like the other protestors, demanded the topple of the regime and the formation of a new and more democratic Government in which all Lebanese could live a comfortable and safe life (Lamirande, 2020). It was a national struggle for freedom, for basic human rights and for an end to the corrupt Government which had been in power for decades. “They shouted *haq, hurriyeh, dawle elmeniyeh* (right, freedom, a secular state) and *kelon ya3ne kelon* (all of them means all of them) to vocalize their demands in the national struggle for liberation and independence which had a close connection between women’s demands for emancipation and independence” (Sfeir, 2020, p. 3). Women, however, did not only partake in the national struggle, but also in one relating to the increase in women’s rights within the country (France 24, 2019). Women found a voice within this movement, a voice which showed that men cannot win the national struggle if women are left behind, the two go hand in hand (Al Jazeera, 2020).

*“It’s not a secret that women in this country are treated very unfairly. But that’s not our fight for the moment, or let us say it is not our only or main fight. Let’s begin by getting our most basic rights (electricity, education, health, etc...). Once this is achieved, I am sure the rest will follow smoothly. But even if I do not want to admit it, there were two fights in this revolution, the unifying fight for our country, and the fight for marginalized groups, like us women (Interviewee 2).*

Women had been treated as second-class citizen for far too long and used the Lebanese Revolution as a platform to bring attention to their own struggle against the patriarchal structure, something which, as I have mentioned, is an integral part of feminist theory

(Lamirande, 2019). Although women were a part of the 'national collective identity', they were also a part of a 'female collective identity' with which they were trying to break through the patriarchal ceiling of their society. They added their feminist touch to the revolution by incorporating their own demands in hopes of having more rights as Lebanese women. Their primary demands were political and economic reforms. "Beyond this, key women's demands have included: equal nationality rights, a unified personal status law, same opportunities in the economic sector, increased political representation of women, and legal protection against sexual harassment and violence against women" (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 13). They demanded an end to the discriminatory laws present in the Lebanese system. They demanded the same rights as those granted to their husbands when it comes to passing on their nationality. They demanded the same rights for women of all religions and sects. They demanded the same rights and opportunities in the labor market. They demanded more seats in the Government and any institution relating to it. They demanded protection in order to live a safe life without the fear of physical or sexual violence.

Furthermore, feminists used the platform of protests to draw attention to the needs and interests of marginalized groups. As I have mentioned previously, feminist theory does not only focus on the oppression of women, but any other marginalized group in society. Feminist marches and discussions called for the abolishment of aspects such as the *Kafala* system, the improvement of the social system for women with disabilities, the improvement of veiled women's access to proper work and better living standards and protection of refugees. Of course, their demands focused heavily on the rights of women, but also on minority groups unable to speak up for themselves. One cause which was at the top of the women's agenda was in relation to domestic workers. Lebanon has had a long history with such workers, who come from countries such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh or the Congo. These women are often stripped of their passports upon arrival and are not always treated in the best of manner, myself at times even calling what I saw modern-day slavery. "The Kafala system which upholds such harsh treatment of foreign domestic workers was on the women's agenda throughout the revolution" (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 14). Another issue which was at the top of their list of demands was in relation to the LGBTQI community. Even though Lebanon might be more

tolerant towards LGBTQI individuals, at the political sphere, harsh laws against this group still exist, something the many women of the revolution were trying to change (Lamirande, 2020).

“Standing on the front line, guiding and shielding thousands of protesters from the reels of barbed wire and the rows of riot police, women were keeping the pulse of the Lebanese revolution beating” (Zrein, 2020). Their years of repression and status as second-class citizens within their own country gave them the bravery and stamina to demand changes in the economic, political and social spheres. Not only did they demand more rights from the politicians and those in charge, but also from their fellow male citizens. They wanted to be seen as equals both in public and private life and demanded the rights which should have been granted decades ago (Zrein, 2020, pp. 62–63). Although this has been perceived as a positive step by many, and men have joined women in their feminist struggle, not all men feel the same; some men verbally and physically opposed the high involvement and presence of women within the movement (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 11). This separate female struggle was the basis for the formation of the second collective identity present within the revolution, the ‘female collective identity’, through which women fought for their rights as a marginalized group.

Joining in the movement was not easy though for all women equally. In some parts of Lebanon, it seems harder than in others to change the minds of the men when it comes to feminist issues. For instance, women from certain parts of Lebanon reported to UN Women that their involvement in the movement was not easy, and that some men repeatedly tried to hinder them from partaking (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 11). Some men are not ready to let go of the norms of their patriarchal society, which made it even harder for women to attain change. Setbacks are normal in any social movement, but the roles of women in the Lebanese Revolution were powerful and manifold. Women were ready to stand up and face anyone attempting to come between them and their goal. Not only did Lebanese women gain the confidence to speak up and fight for change but inspired other women, mainly in other Arab countries, to speak up (Elbasnaly & Knipp, 2019)

### **6.5 Women and their Roles in the Revolution**

At the front of marches and discussion groups, sit-ins and roadblocks, women were a key driving force behind the movement with all types of women screaming and shouting for change (Humran, 2020, p. 30). They were present in every aspect of the revolution, fighting for more representation and rights for them as women while partaking in the national struggle (Hall, 2019). Not only were women present in surprisingly large numbers but they also played many important roles within the national movement which led to the formation of one the most important slogans of the revolution, 'The revolution is female' (Humran, 2020, p. 30). All women I interviewed agree upon the fact that both men and women played an important role within the movement, but that not all the credit could be given to women. Only one of the women I interviewed said that if she were to personify the revolution, she would indeed make it a woman.

*"Yes, if I would personify the revolution, yes I would call it a woman because it has the characteristics of a women, the emotions, the warmth but also the strength. Women stood in the front to protect the other protesters, to protect the youth. They cooked for people, they encouraged people to continue, they organized sit-ins and other things" (Interviewee 3).*

For women, the revolution meant more than what it might have been for men since they were fighting for both their country and for their rights as women (Hall, 2019). Therefore, I will use this section to discuss the roles of women within the revolution. Their roles can be divided into four overarching categories, which are as follows: women made the revolution more peaceful; women were drivers of political activism and civic engagement; women leveraged national media coverage; and women countered sexual harassment, gender threats and homophobia.

#### **Women made the protests more peaceful**

*"It was that they were on the front lines, right there in your face, not holding back. They acted this way because they knew that men were more prone to physical violence and abuse from the security forces. Women took the role to protect the other protesters. It was very important" (Interviewee 4).*

The most significant and important influence women had on the Lebanese Revolution was making it a more peaceful movement (Hall, 2019). Women are seen differently, more peaceful, to men in Lebanese society and thus used their status in order to bring peace to the protests and attempted to enforce nonviolence (Sfeir, 2020, p. 4). All four women I interviewed agreed upon the fact that one of the major, and most vital, roles women played within the movement was that of making it more peaceful. They used their roles in society as mothers, sisters, wives, daughters and grandmothers to minimize violence against themselves and other protestors. The first two nights of the demonstrations were filled with violent outbursts between the protestors and the army until a group of women decided to take matters into their own hands by forming a human shield to separate the two sides (Hall, 2019). They forced their way to the front and formed a female frontline, standing between the protestors and the army. They used their bodies to protect the men, knowing that the soldiers would never, or very rarely, hit a woman or use any sort of force against them the way they would against a man. The tactic of using their social status as well as their bodies to keep the movement as peaceful as possible seemed to be very successful (Lamirande, 2020). In response to this tactic, the Lebanese army sent more female soldiers to the streets; however, the majority of the forces continued to be men (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 8). Since most soldiers and police officers continued to be male throughout the entire revolution, this tactic continued to prove to be very useful in protecting the other protestors.

“When faced with violence, either against themselves or fellow protestors, women report yelling essentialist tropes such as, ‘what’s wrong with you animals, I am a woman!’ or older women would scream ‘don’t harm us, I could be your mom’” (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 8). This tactic proved to be very effective because the army or police officers would very rarely hit someone who could be their mother or sister. Obviously, women not only took to the streets to protect their fellow male protestors but also to fight for their country and their rights as women. It must be acknowledged, however, that an initial motivation for some women, especially mothers, to go to the streets was to protect their children (Moukaddem, 2020). Gradually, this motivation spread to include protecting not only their own kids but all kids and protestors in general. They became mothers, sisters and grandmothers to all protestors,

protecting them as if they were their own. On multiple occasions, sisters, mothers and grandmothers were seen screaming at soldiers for using violence or simply questioning them as to why they would still defend such corrupt politicians. One such occasion went viral on the social media. An old, veiled women protesting in Beirut went up to a soldier and started screaming at him, questioning his motives, why he was on the wrong side, why he was protecting the corrupt, why he did not realize he too was suffering under their rule. The soldier let her talk, even scream, and when she was done kissed her on the forehead and apologized. Much of the positivity of this interaction was due to her age and gender, and the respect paid to the elderly in Lebanon. If a young man had approached the guard in a similar act of defiance, things likely would have gone differently but the army would not hurt an elderly woman, which allowed the interaction and sentimental connection between her and the guard to occur (Lamirande, 2020).

Female protestors created an atmosphere of security and safety which, in return, allowed families with young children to join the protests (WILPF, 2019). The streets were filled with men and women, old and young, and families with children, a diversity which was highly related to the fact that so many women were partaking in the protests and that those women were creating a peaceful space, which allowed thousands of people to feel safe enough to join (Zrein, 2020, p. 63). It had not been common, until then, to have such a large number of children present in such a movement, but women allowed all ages to partake in the struggle and be a part of the change, while at the same time feeling secure doing so. Not only in Beirut, but all around the country women brought peace to the streets. "In cities across the country, women have led peace marches to amplify protesters' messages around change and non-violence. In Tripoli, women organized daily peace marches for a period of time. Feminists in Baalbek organized similar marches, where white roses were distributed as a symbol for peace" (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 9). Women all around Lebanon wanted to see change, at both the national and feminist levels, but they wanted the change to happen peacefully. Many mothers who had been alive throughout the civil war did not want history to repeat itself. They wanted Lebanon to change, to gain more rights, and have a more hopeful future for their children but by no means did they want the revolution to turn violent or bloody.

*Women were drivers of political activism and civic engagement*

Not only did women make the movement more peaceful and even used their bodies to protect their fellow participants, but they were also a leading force when it came to political activism and civic engagement. Women were leaders when it came to political organizing. They planned protests and marches, organized candlelight vigils, wrote articles, led roadblocks, created slogans and produced art pieces (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 10). Not only were they the ones protecting and defending their fellow protestors but they were often those organizing the events which added up and formed the revolution. Furthermore, women acted as facilitators between various groups, emphasizing on the fact that it must be one unified group seeking change from the Government (Lamirande, 2020). When things escalated and matters got heated, they were the ones who ensured unity, and the continuation of a 'national collective identity' among the protestors and participants prevailed. They acted as mediators and had an open ear for everyone to ensure that the movement stayed homogenous and peaceful and the fight against the corrupt leaders was the only fight at hand. "No discussion could take place without women leading the narrative and putting their issues first, by creating the structures and platforms that carry us and carry our issues with them" (Geha, 2020, p. 5).

*"They cooked for people, they encouraged people to continue, they organized sit-ins and other things"*  
(Interviewee 3).

Women cooked and distributed meals, which allowed women who might have not been present on the streets, to partake in the movement (Lamirande, 2020). In Beirut's Base Camp, a sort of village that developed in the city center of the capital, women cooked and distributed meals to the protestors but also to those who would otherwise go hungry. The women who were not able to be physically present in the movement took care of those in the streets (Abou-Zahr, 2020). They were not only politically active but showed an abundance of civic engagement by taking care of all those part of the struggle. Many protestors said that women who were not partaking in the protests, opened up their homes, allowing them to shower and eat and recuperate before heading back to the streets (Abou-Zahr, 2020). Both groups of women, those actively partaking in the protests and those who were not, aided the masses by taking care of

those protesting in the streets as well as those who were socially and economically most in need. Some women created a sort of day-care, with friends taking turns babysitting each others children, so that they could each take shifts on the streets (Geha, 2020, p. 5). Women partook in the protests, sit-ins or roadblocks, but they were also the ones making sure that everything behind the scenes continued to function. They led the various aspects of the revolution, while at the same time taking care of the needs of their families and protestors. Their political and civic engagement was immense and without it, the movement would have not been the same.

*Women leveraged national media coverage*

Women were seen in abundance in a variety of different media outlets and newspapers. On Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, in newspaper articles and on news channels, women were seen everywhere. Their involvement and roles were seen and praised from all sides. Art, which was an integral part of the revolution, was also created in abundance by female protestors. Roula Abdo, a Lebanese artist, was one of the leading figures shown in the media when it came to the revolution's art. "She asserted that activism art had played an important role in the revolution, specifically at the *Nour el-thawra* (light of the revolution) march led by the women, which was when Abdo produced what would become one of the most iconic images of the Lebanese revolution, a painting entitled *Revolution is female*" (Humran, 2020, p. 34). Her painting was seen everywhere on social media, and it became a symbol of the strength, power and involvement of women in the movement. By mainly using the color red, which she explained symbolized the color of the revolution, as well as by making the face resemble a statue more than an actual human, she wanted to portray the strength and power of all the women who partook in the movement (Humran, 2020, p. 35).

Not only were women seen everywhere in the media, they also influenced its content and took part in its production on news channels as well as social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 11). They knew that this was the only way the truth could be portrayed; therefore, videos and pictures were seen on all social media platforms portraying the involvement, demands and roles of women. Feminists highly influenced the local press creating their own pieces about the movement (Dore-Weeks et al.,

2019, p. 11) . Women either wrote articles themselves or influenced many of those being written on them. “On October 31, 2019, new lyrics to the national anthem hit the front page of Lebanon’s Annahar newspaper, with an historic addition: the word women was printed in bold, red, and center” (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 12). Prior to this article, only the word men was included in the national anthem, but through their persistence and involvement in the media, women showed that they too deserve to have a place in their nation’s song. In the second month of the revolution, women also organized and held a press conference in Beirut to discuss feminist issues and further increase their visibility within the movement (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 11). They were adamant to be the ones telling their story to the world, rather than allowing people, who might not stand with them, to talk about their struggle, demands and roles in Lebanese society.

*Women countered sexual harassment, gender threats and homophobia*

The final role discussed in this section is the role they played in countering sexual harassment, gender threats and homophobia. Unlike the previous roles mentioned, this role is only in relation to their ‘female collective identity’. Most men would not benefit from the alteration of aspects relating to sexual harassment or gender threats, which is why it was, in general, not on the agenda of the ‘national collective identity’. “The Lebanese State’s hesitance to acknowledge and address violence against women reveals its patriarchal nature, working hand in hand with religious institutions to preserve the status quo; they feed on each other to maintain their authority” (Salameh, 2014, p. 17). Women have been victims of sexual harassment and physical abuse in the private and the public sphere for way too long. Therefore, women took it upon themselves to use the revolution as a platform to attempt bringing an end to this issue. Through a variety of sit-ins, marches and vigils, they wanted to put an end to such acts and crimes committed against women. In the third month of the revolution, women organized and led a march against sexual harassment and assault in Beirut, in hopes of drawing attention to a topic which had previously not been discussed much (Lamirande, 2020).

Although a number of male protestors encouraged and even aided women in their personal fight within the Lebanese society, not all men did. Some simply did not partake, some

frowned upon their demands and some were the living proof as to why they were fighting for such a change. The sad truth is that, on multiple occasions, women reported cases of sexual harassment throughout the movement, furthermore portraying the dire situation (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 11). Some men perceived the presence of such a high number of women confidently striving for change as unacceptable or even as an invitation to satisfy their own pleasures. While perceived to be less frequent in Beirut in comparison to Lebanon's other cities and towns, women did confront sexual harassment and groping, with many incidents happening in massive crowds. "Women exposed and responded to incident through volunteer 'committee of guards' and social media accounts such as Harass Tracker, Akhbar Al-Saha and @HarassExposerLB" (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 12). Multiple Lebanese men were named and shamed on such platforms for their acts of sexual harassment both prior to and during the revolution. Marches were organized by women in order to fight this problem prevailing in Lebanon. One of these marches included the 'A rapist in your path' dance, previously mentioned in this thesis, but in this case performed with Arabic lyrics (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 12). They were loud and they were many, and they were adamant to end any form of harassment against any woman living in their country.

Just as we saw was the case in feminist theory, women also took on the role as defender of those groups who are just as marginalized and oppressed, in Lebanese society and under Lebanese law, as they are themselves. Another feminist issue within the Lebanese Revolution, which was extremely important, was in relation to the LGBTQ rights, or rather the lack thereof, within the country (Lamirande, 2020). LGBTQ living within Lebanon endure harsh and unjust laws and treatment. Although Lebanon is known to be more tolerant than much of the Arab World, homosexuals, transgender, bisexuals and other such groups of people endure much pain living in Lebanon. Just as women, they are not given the basic human rights they deserve; therefore, a group of women made it a point to incorporate the rights of those people and fight for them just as they were fighting for themselves (Lamirande, 2020). Women never forgot that they were not the only marginalised group of people living in Lebanon and included other groups in their struggle.

“Even when violence has escalated, they have taken charge, occupied the cities, led the protests, organized sit-ins, blocked roads, organized marches and public discussions, led recycling and cleaning initiatives, and even cooked alongside men to feed the thousands of protesters congregating every day. As they did during the Civil War, Lebanese women continue to serve as a buffer between protesters and the state: they are the intermediaries who shield the men, protecting them from police brutality. Women have directed their efforts toward maintaining constructive dialogue between the protesters and the government” (Sfeir, 2020, pp. 4–5). I have chosen to incorporate this quote at the end of this chapter, as it sums up the majority of the roles women played within the movement. Without the high presence of women and the important roles they played, the movement would have not been the same.

## **7. A History of Modern-day Palestine**

Palestine is a rather small country in size, located on the Mediterranean Sea bordering Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan, with an important geographic strategic location (Key, 2018). Prior to the formation of the State of Israel, Palestine was a nation, just like Lebanon, marked with religious diversity, with Christians, Muslims, Druze and Jews living side by side with one another (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014). The modern history of Palestine is very complex and filled with the involvement of a number of external parties. It is a history which cannot be discussed without the inclusion of multiple other nations and parties, such as the Ottoman empire, Britain and Israel. This chapter discusses the history of Palestine from the late 1800s until today.

### ***7.1 Palestine under British Rule***

Modern Palestinian history goes hand in hand with the formation of the State of Israel. In the 1900s, Palestine, just as most of the region, was under Ottoman rule, and it was in those years that the first wave of Jewish migrants from Europe entered Palestinian territory (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.7). Although Jews, Christians and a Muslim majority had lived side by side in Palestine for centuries, this wave of Jewish immigrants was the beginning of the end of Palestine. The newcomers believed Palestine to be the ideal place for the formation of a Jewish nation, as it was the birthplace of their religion. “Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, is a modern political movement. Its core beliefs are that all Jews constitute one nation (not simply a religious or ethnic community) and that the only solution to anti-Semitism, the hostility against Jewish people, is the concentration of as many Jews as possible in one place and the establishment of a Jewish state in the region of Palestine” (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.8). Although the Second World War had not yet erupted, anti-Semitic notions were already widespread around the world. Jews felt safer in what they saw as their homeland, and mass migration into Palestine commenced. After the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire collapsed and Britain took control over Palestine, later on renaming it ‘The British Mandate for Palestine’ (Kay, 2018). As the Ottoman Empire was aligned with Germany throughout the First World War against Britain and France, Britain made a pact with the Arabs of the region. The British promised the Arabs of the region that they could regain control over their territory if they aided Britain in

their fight against the Ottoman Empire (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.8). The Arab Uprising was successful and led to the end of the Ottoman rule in Palestine. However, matters were not settled at this point as this was not the only pact Britain had made. "In 1917, the British Foreign Minister, Lord Arthur Balfour, issued the Balfour Declaration which announced his government's support for the establishment of 'a Jewish national home in Palestine'" (Traboulsi, 2012). Although these two agreements were already contradictory in themselves, and one would cancel out the other, Britain went as far as making a third agreement with yet another party. The third agreement, which was more or less done in secret, was a deal with France which focused on dividing the Arab 'nations' of the Ottoman Empire between the two countries (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.11). It was a recipe for disaster and it was clear from the beginning that at least one of the parties involved was not going to get what they were promised. Palestinians feared what was to come as more and more Jewish people entered Palestine and purchased properties, leading to increasing tensions and clashes between them and the newcomers (Kay, 2018).

With Hitler coming to power and the start of the Second World War, the situation for Jews in Europe became unbearable. The Holocaust resulted in large numbers of Jews fleeing to Palestine, to the point that Britain felt the need to limit this mass migration (Kay, 2018). These Jewish refugees were not welcomed with open arms by the Arabs as they were growing drastically in numbers as well as in power, leading to the three-year Arab revolt in 1936, which was fought against the British rule as well as the increasing Zionist movement (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.12). Although this revolt was crushed by Britain, they reconsidered matters and wanted to find some sort of solution to end the tensions. This led to the formation of the 'White Paper', which was created in order to decrease Jewish migration and their power, a step which ended the alliance between the Jews and Britain (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.12).

### ***7.2 The Formation of the State of Israel***

Tensions between the two parties continued to increase. The Jewish side argued that it was their ancestral home and the birth place of their religion, but Palestinian Arabs claimed the land for themselves and opposed the move. Palestinians claimed their right to the land not only

for religious reasons but much more based on the fact that they had been living there for centuries, which should prohibit the formation of a solely Jewish State within their land (BBC, 2021). Following the end of World War II, hostilities between the Zionists, the Arabs and the British continued, and the intervention of the recently formed United Nations was of utmost importance. “In 1947 Britain ended its mandate over Palestine, although the complete end was in 1948, and the United Nations proposed to split ‘the British Mandate for Palestine’ into Israel and Palestine, with Jerusalem being an international zone” (Kay, 2018). The Jewish part would be slightly larger than the Palestine share, as it was believed that more Jews would continue to immigrate into the newly formed Jewish State. The Jews accepted the United Nations’ partition plan, secretly hoping that, in the future, they would be able to expand their borders to their liking, while Palestine and its Arab brothers were by no means willing to accept a decision which they saw as an international betrayal (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.13). On May 14, 1948, to the dismay of the Palestinians and the Arab nations, the State of Israel was formed (Al Jazeera, 2014). It was unacceptable for the Arabs that a nation was created within the Palestinian borders and, even worse, that the Jews obtained more land than the Palestinians. This objection by both the Palestinians and their Arab neighbouring countries led to the eruption of war in 1948 (Kay, 2018). “Lebanon also participated in the Arab–Israeli war of 1948, as its army’s assigned mission was to move from Ras al-Naqura, in Lebanon on the coastal road, in the direction of Acre and Haifa, in Palestine, to aid their Arab brothers” (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 114). Fighting, however, did not last long, and in 1949, the Arab-Israeli war came to an end with Israel emerging as the winner and as a nation stronger than ever. What had previously been known as Palestine was now divided into multiple parts: the first part, which made up more than 70 per cent of the territory, was the State of Israel; the second part, which was considered Palestinian territory and known as the West Bank, was under Jordanian control; and the third part, also considered Palestinian territory known as the Gaza Strip, was under Egypt’s control (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.14). The United Nations’ partition of the territory was not put in place, and the Palestinians lost not only part of their country but any sort of control altogether.

Throughout the fighting of 1948 and 1949, more than half a million Palestinians were forced out of their homes in a mass mobilization known as the *Nakba* (the catastrophe) (Al

Jazeera, 2014). These people were displaced internally in refugee camps, as well as in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Hundreds of thousands lost everything, their homes, their belongings, everything. Not only were people in great numbers chased out of their homes and country but also more than 10,000 Palestinians lost their lives during the catastrophe (Al Jazeera). To simply say that they lost their lives is actually a euphemism for the violence and brutality of the situation. Thousands of Palestinian men, women and children were murdered at the hands of the Israelis, with the most known atrocity occurring at Deir Yassine, a small Palestinian village near Jerusalem, where more than 200 Palestinians were murdered at the hands of Israel (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.14). It was a time marked by bloodshed and hardship and one which is engraved in the hearts and minds of all Palestinian people. "The depth of the scars left in the collective memory of the Palestinian psyche by the 1948 Nakba is very difficult to imagine, seeing as within a brief period of time, often under the direct threat of arms, the Palestinians were terrorized out of their homeland" (Nusseibeh, 1997).

Despite the fact that a truce was reached between the Arab States and Israel, after 1949, tensions continued and the eruption of another war was to be expected at any time (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.16). The tensions were furthermore sharpened through the Cold War, with Israel siding with the United States, while the Arab nations presumably sided with the Soviet Union. These alliances and related confusion led to an instance where false information was given to Egypt and Syria by the USSR, which led to the creation of a blockade on parts of the Israeli borders (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.17). Israel did not remain silent for long, and the 1967 six-day war commenced. The Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies were quickly defeated in the matter of a few days, and Israel took control of all Palestinian territories as well as some parts of Egypt and Syria (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.17). Not only did Israel gain even more land but they proved and established themselves as the strongest and most dominant regional military power. The aftermath of the war was yet another wave of internal displacement and emigration of Palestinian refugees to countries such as Lebanon (Harris, 2012, p.220). Lebanon, an unstable country at the time, was overwhelmed with the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians seeking

refuge, and Lebanon's economic and political problems increased even further (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 114).

### **7.3 The Formation of the PLO**

It was around that time that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was created, which was first based in Jordan but soon, in 1970, established its headquarters in Lebanon, only increasing the political tensions with Israel (Harris, 2012, p.220). "Although the PLO was created prior to the six-day war, in 1964 by the Arab League in an effort to control Palestinian nationalism, it was only after the 1967 war that Yasser Arafat became the Chairman" (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.19). Yasser Arafat was not only the chairman but the leader of the largest group of the PLO, the *Fatah*. The PLO is often seen as one unified entity, however, this is not the case. It was comprised of a multitude of groups, with the following most influential groups: *Fatah*, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Palestinian People Party (PPP) (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.19). The goal of the PLO was to fight the Zionists and reclaim the land that had been stolen from them. As previously mentioned, their initial base was in Jordan; however, after some problems between them and the Jordanian Government, they were expelled and relocated to Lebanon (William Harris, 2012). The PLO operated in Lebanon for two decades but due to this formation of a 'State within a State', their high involvement in the civil war and the war they were waging on Israel from Lebanon, they were expelled from Lebanon in the early 1980s and immediately relocated to Tunisia (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.19).

Egypt was hit hard when it lost the Sinai Peninsula to Israel therefore, in 1973, declared war on Israel to regain control (Kay, 2018). This move did not end well for Egypt, and the United States intervened quickly in order to create some sort of peace between the two parties, and the region in general. In September 1978, President Jimmy Carter invited Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president at the time, and the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to Camp David in Maryland. "Two agreements, signed by both parties, but not by any of the other Arab states entailed: An Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed in 1979 and an agreement proposed to grant

autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip” (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.21). This peace treaty was an insult to the Palestinians and the other Arab nations on behalf of Egypt as Israel had no intentions to follow either the United Nations’ partition plan or the agreements signed in Camp David.

#### ***7.4 The Continuing Struggle of the Palestinian People***

The Palestinians of both the West Bank and Gaza grew angrier and more frustrated over the years. Israel continued to disregard the different United Nations agreements and other signed pact and expanded the Israeli territory at the expense of the Palestinian people. This frustration led to the emergence of the *Intifadas*, meaning ‘uprisings’ against Israel. “The first Intifada was from 1987 until 1993 and the second Intifada from 2000 until 2005, although no specific event really ended the Second Intifada and some say it never really came to an end” (Speri, 2019). These ‘uprisings’ were not ignited by the PLO or any other political group, but rather by the masses who were frustrated and were ready for change (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.21). Palestinian civilians had enough of the oppression and humiliation they were facing on a daily basis by the Israeli State and its army. Hundreds of thousands of people were ready for change and saw it as their only chance to take matters into their hands. Although both movements were not military operations or categorized as wars, the Second *Intifada* was in essence much more violent than the first, leading to 1,000 Israeli and 3,200 Palestinian deaths (Kay, 2018). The *Intifadas*, especially the first one, will be explained in detail within the next chapter and, therefore, will not be discussed any further at this point.

Although the *Intifadas* were resistance movements ignited by from the masses, political organizations in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank did exist, and continue to do so, and were a part of the *Intifadas* over the years. The two Palestinian territories are led by two separate political entities. In the West Bank, the *Fatah* movement, which is the leading group of the PLO, holds the power, while in the Gaza Strip, *Hamas*, a militant movement created in 1987, originating from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, is the entity in charge (Laub and Robinson, 2021). The main challenges for Palestine are that not only are its territories separated and

millions of their people live abroad as refugees, but it does not have one unified government or political entity leading the fight for its cause.

According to Human Rights Watch, an independent, international, non-governmental organization that promotes respect for human rights and international law, Israel continues to treat Palestinian people, living in both Gaza and the West Bank, harshly and denies them many of their basic needs which they are entitled to in order to live a dignified life (Kay, 2018). Almost one century has passed since the formation of the State of Israel but an end to the conflict is nowhere in sight. Palestinian people have been stripped of most of their rights and freedoms, and every day under the Israeli rule is a battle. In the Gaza Strip, life continues to be almost impossible for two main reasons. First, *Hamas*, an organization judged as terrorist group by many nations, is in a constant battle with the Israeli State, leading to the deaths of many Palestinians living within the territory (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.21). Second, Israel continuous to block the sea and land lines reaching into the Gaza Strip, making life unlivable for the millions of inhabitants residing there (Hatuqa, 2021). No matter whose fault it might be, that of Hamas or any other Palestinian organization or that of Israel and the Israeli Government, it is the Palestinian people who have been and continue to be the ones suffering the most. "Its more than 50-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza involves systematic rights abuses, including collective punishment, routine use of excessive lethal force, and prolonged administrative detention without charge or trial for hundreds. The Palestinians living in the West Bank have not had it any easier than their brothers and sisters in Gaza. Israel continues to build and support illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, expropriating Palestinian land and imposing burdens on Palestinians but not on settlers, restricting their access to basic services and making it nearly impossible for them to build in much of the West Bank without risking demolition" (Kay, 2018).

Although the types of problems people face might be of a different kind, life in the West Bank is also a struggle, to say the least. Not only are people in the West Bank restricted from building properties and lose their existing properties to illegal settlers, but Israel also continues to maintain restrictions such as check points and the separation barrier, making daily tasks, such as going to school or work, a strenuous process (Kay, 2018).

It has been a bloody and terrible dispute which has been going on for almost one hundred years, with casualties on both sides, although casualties on the Palestinian side are much higher (Kay, 2018). Daily life from going to school, to work or even to the supermarket is a struggle for Palestinian people in the West Bank due to the restrictions enforced by the Israeli army. On the other hand, the people living in Gaza struggle to import or export any products, making it hard for them to ensure their basic needs such as food and water. Those living in areas within the so-called Israeli borders face entirely different problems all together. They face discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity and religion. To illustrate the problems facing those people living in cities such as Jerusalem, I will discuss an event which only happened last year.

On May 10, 2021, clashes erupted between Israelis and Palestinians. *Hamas*, out of the Gaza Strip, and Israel launched rockets on each other, accompanied by clashes occurring on Israeli territories (Ojumu, 2021). I am not discussing these events and outbreaks of violence in order to point the finger and blame Israel for all the violence which happened in those 11 days. *Hamas* used military weapons just as Israel did, they were also responsible for all those who lost their lives throughout that time. But why am I bringing up this event is to understand what initiated it, to portray the struggles Palestinians continue to face and to gain a better understanding of the current Palestinian-Israeli relationship. Multiple events led up to this outbreak of violence. The first reason was the fact that multiple Palestinian families had been evicted from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, a Palestinian neighborhood in Jerusalem, in order to make place for new Jewish families (Ojumu, 2021). The predicament of these families infuriated many Palestinians and their supporters worldwide, seeing the eviction as yet another sign of oppression against the Palestinian people who had lived in these homes for generations. The second reason for the outbreak of fighting started about four weeks earlier, on April 13, the first day of Ramadan, the holiest month for Muslims, which that year also happened to coincide with Memorial Day in Israel, a day honoring Israelis who had died fighting for their country (Ojumu, 2021). On that day, the Israeli President, Reuven Rivlin, was going to deliver a speech at the Western Wall of Jerusalem, a Jewish holy site located near the Aqsa Mosque, which is one of the holiest sites for Muslims (Ojumu, 2021). The politicians were concerned that the call to prayer from the Mosque would drown out the President's speech. Therefore, a squad of Israeli

police officers kicked out all individuals praying in the Mosque and cut a cable so that the sound of the prayer would no longer be heard and interfere with the President's speech (Ojumu, 2021). It was a slap in the face for not just every Muslim praying in the Mosque at the time, but every Muslim around the world. To interrupt someone's prayer, to throw them out of one of the holiest sites for Muslims, and all that in the most important month of the year for any practicing Muslim. This was not all, there was one more event that was the last straw that broke the camel's back. "Shortly after the occurrence at the Mosque, the Israeli police barricaded a plaza adjacent to the Damascus Gate, one of the main entrances to the Old City of Jerusalem, a place where young Palestinians often hang out at night, especially during the holy month" (Ojumu, 2021). Clashes on the streets between Palestinians and the Israeli police as well as Israeli civilians broke out quickly. *Hamas* did not stay quiet for long either, and shortly after rockets were fired from both sides.

Many argue that these events which led to the violence between *Hamas* and Israel were not accidents but rather well planned provocations by Israel, knowing that *Hamas* would not stay quiet for long and once more being labeled as a terrorist regime (Ojumu, 2021). Stating that all Israelis are at fault and all Palestinians are innocent would be wrong and is something that I, as partly Palestinian, am well aware of. This example, which is one of many, is simply meant to portray that the Israeli Government, military and police continue to oppress and provoke the Palestinian people. "In most of these incidents happening the primary instigators are both the right wing Jewish party, under the control of Bibi Netanyahu, and *Hamas*, under the control of Yahya Sinwar" (Ojumu, 2021). The ones suffering the most are the civilians on both sides, but mostly Palestinians. Both *Hamas* and the Israeli Government must be blamed for such events. Clashes that occur between Palestinian civilians and the Israeli police are inevitable because there is only so much oppression a group of people can handle, and the Palestinian people are bound to defend themselves at some point (Ojumu, 2021).

## **8. The Palestinian *Intifada***

The word *Intifada* can be translated into English as ‘uprising’ or ‘shaking off’. Although there were two *Intifadas* or uprisings which occurred in Palestine at different times, the focus within this section will be placed on the first, for different reasons. First, much more information can be found on the First *Intifada*. A plethora of journals, articles, reports, videos and movies have been published on it. Second, for the sake and message of this thesis, it is not feasible to go into detail for both of these movements. Third, despite numerous non-violent episodes, the Second *Intifada* was much more violent than the first (Norman, 2010). Although it cannot be labelled as a war, the degree of violence and resulting deaths were much higher in the Second *Intifada* in comparison with the first. Fourth, the First *Intifada* is marked by a high involvement of Palestinian women, which is the reason I chose it to begin with. Since this is a comparative study on the involvement and presence of women in two social movements, it is more feasible to compare the 2019 Lebanese revolution with the 1987 First *Intifada* rather than the second. The Second *Intifada* will only be discussed very briefly at the end of this chapter.

### **8.1 The First *Intifada***

“The First Intifada was a largely spontaneous series of Palestinian demonstrations, nonviolent actions like mass boycotts, civil disobedience, Palestinians refusing to work jobs in Israel, and attacks (using rocks, Molotov cocktails, and occasionally firearms) on Israelis” (Speri, 2019). In December of 1987, a handful of Palestinian civilians were killed by an Israeli truck driver, an event which marked the beginning of the First *Intifada* (Cohoon, 2014, p. 10). It soon spread to the West Bank and to parts of Israel. Although the event which ignited it was the killing of four Palestinian people, tensions had been building up for decades, ever since the formation of the State of Israel, and it was only a matter of time that such an uprising, or revolution, was to occur (Cohoon, 2014, p. 10). Specifically, the time after the 1967 war to date marked a continual conflict between the two parties (Cohoon, 2014, p. 10). The *Intifada* was not only a fight against Israel but also one aiming to change the social and political structures within the country. It was a demand for change, mainly for political change directed towards Israel, but also for social change within Palestine such as women rebelling against the patriarchal society or

the young rebelling against the older generations (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 48). It was an uprising with a manifold of demands and goals, but what all protestors, political groups, committees and organizations had in common was the fight against the oppression of Israel and the demand for more rights for those living within the Palestinian territories and for those living within Israeli territory as well.

Palestinians were highly frustrated of living as second-class citizens in their own land and wanted to end the occupation which encompassed all spheres of life, telling them what to do and how to do it (Basha, 2017). The uprising was characterized as a fight for the nations demand for self-determination (Cohoon, 2014). Young and old, men and women, people from all walks of life were involved, protesting against the oppression and attempting to change the future of their country. Typical for the First *Intifada* was its grassroots and democratic nature, seeing people from all different social spheres playing a part (Al- Charif, 2020). Not only were people of all classes involved, but what furthermore made this movement so unique and important was the high involvement of women (Cohoon, 2014, p. 4). Women were involved in what I call the 'national collective identity' and fought side by side with all those involved in the uprising. But at the same time, just as was the case in Lebanon, the women of Palestine also created a separate collective identity, through which they pursued their feminist agenda. The involvement of women within the First *Intifada* will be discussed in detail within the next section, as their roles were manifold and their presence within the movement was of utmost importance.

The First Palestinian *Intifada* was the most vibrant and non-violent mass mobilization ever seen in Palestinian history (Bouarrouj, 2018). "The first few years of the Intifada involved many forms of civil disobedience, including massive demonstrations, general strikes, refusal to pay taxes, boycott of Israeli products, political graffiti and the establishment of underground schools, seeing as regular schools were being closed by the military as reprisals for the uprising" (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.21). Of course, as mentioned above, it was not completely free from violence. Since it was mainly Palestinian civilians on the one side and Israeli military forces on the other, Palestinians did resort to the use of violence, such as throwing Molotov cocktails and

rocks (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.21). Israel, under direct instructions from their minister of defense at the time, tried to bring an end to the movement from the early days through enforcing violence on the demonstrators (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.22). During the First *Intifada*, Israeli forces killed more than 1,000 Palestinians and injured more than 130,000, not to forget the tens of thousands who were imprisoned and at times tortured (Speri, 2019)

Although the *Intifada* was a grassroots movement, the involvement of political parties, committees and organizations was of essence for the uprising. It was a spontaneous movement, not planned by any political group or committee, but over time the involvement of Palestinian political parties was inevitable. There was a coordination and constant dialogue between the people and the different political parties; initially, however, the people did not wait for instructions to come from above, but played a role in leading the way of the movement (Bacha, 2017). “The Intifada activism was partially organized through the popular committees under the umbrella of the United National Leadership (UNLU). This organization was composed of the four Palestinian Liberation Organization parties active in the occupied territories: Fatah, the PFLP, the DFLP and the PPP” (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.22). These major political factions each had their own respective women’s committees, which took to the streets to aid the national struggle as well as air their own struggle as women (Hankir, 2018). The respective women’s committees for each faction were the following: for *Fatah* it was the Women’s Committee for Social Work, for PFLP it was the Union of Women’s Committee, for DFLP’s it was the Women Sanction Committee and for PPP it was the Working Women’s Committee. Women were everywhere within the movement and were a major reason why it gained such a wide international coverage (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.22). The broad-based resistance, encompassing both civilians and different committees, reached immense international attention and support. The strength of the people was their unity; they acted as one and defied all odds by facing their oppressor as a unified entity (Bacha, 2017).

## **8.2 The Madrid Conference**

“The second stage of that Intifada was marked by internal conflicts, not only between members of the PLO and the Islamist movement Hamas, but also within the PLO itself” (Al-

Charif, 2020). Since there was not one unifying political entity leading the movement, problems within and between the different organizations stood in the way of a complete success. Furthermore, although all civilians fought for an end to oppression and more rights and freedoms for all Palestinians living in both Palestinian and Israeli territory, as mentioned above, different groups also fought their own battles. For example, as mentioned earlier, women partook in the national struggle, but in parallel aimed to obtain more rights within society, as the Palestinian social structure and norms gave much more power to men in comparison with women. Although the *Intifada* was not a complete success since it did not end the occupation due to the lack of Palestinian political unity as well as the great political and military power of Israel, what it did was shift the power from Palestinian political parties to the civilians (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.22). Civilians no longer waited for orders from headquarters but political entities and civilians, in both Gaza and the West Bank, made decisions for the most part. However, Palestinian activists and civilians knew that if they were going to be successful they needed the help and support from political entities such as the PLO (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.22). Without political guidance and unity, it seemed hard to attain their goal of ending the oppression inflicted on them by the Israeli State.

“After the 1991 Gulf War, the PLO was diplomatically isolated, seeing as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia cut off financial support they had been providing, bringing the organization to the brink of crisis” (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.23). The United States, too, wanted to stabilize its position in the Middle East and saw the Palestine-Israel conflict as a chance to pursue their own interest. In 1991, President George W. Bush advised the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, to start negotiations with the Palestinians and the Arab States at a conference which was to be held in Madrid in October of that year (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.23). The Palestinians had good chances and a powerful position at the conference because they had this wind of grassroots behind them (Hankir, 2018). Per request of the Israeli prime minister, which was granted to him by the United States, the PLO did not take part in these talks and did not represent the interest of the Palestinian people. In following negotiating sessions, in Washington, D.C., the Palestinians were represented by a delegation from the occupied territories, which were advised and led by

the PLO unofficially (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.23). Israel refused to negotiate with what they considered a terrorist organization, which was a success for the Palestinians, since their delegation included esteemed figures and women and no 'terrorists' (Bacha, 2017).

Although the Palestinian and Israeli delegations met many times, little progress was made. In 1992, a new prime minister was appointed in Israel. He promised to bring a quick end to the Israel-Palestine conflict, a promise which was not met (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.23). In December of the same year, Israel expelled 400 Palestinian residents of the occupied territories from their homes, on the grounds that they were radical Islamists, although they had never been tried or convicted (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.23). The living conditions of people in the occupied territories deteriorated drastically under the new Israeli prime minister. "The lack of progress from the talks held in Washington and Madrid as well as the worsening economic and social conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip accelerated the growth of a radical Islamist challenge to the PLO" (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.23-24). This only worsened the situation between the two entities, and chances for an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians seemed to diminish. Furthermore, tensions between Israel and *Hamas* also grew, and the new prime minister, who considered *Hamas* a terrorist group, realized that it posed a bigger threat to Israel than the PLO (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.24).

### **8.3 The Oslo Accords**

The Madrid Conference and the Washington talks seemingly had not brought about change. Since the PLO had weakened the Gulf War, the Washington Talks did not bring about much change and Israel feared the ever-growing strength of *Hamas*, Israel was finally willing to negotiate with the PLO (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.24). In the eyes of Israel, the PLO seemed like the lesser evil, in comparison with organizations such as *Hamas*. Therefore, Israel initiated secret negotiations in Norway, with PLO representatives, who had not been invited to the Madrid and the Washington talks (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.24). "Seated at the table were noteworthy leaders, including PLO head Yassir Arafat, former Israeli prime minister [Shimon Peres](#), Israeli prime minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#) and Norwegian deputy foreign minister Jan Egeland

who acted as a sort of mediator” (Bacha, 2017). As result of the negotiations, the Oslo Accords were signed, which were meant to be the first step of Israel to some day withdraw their troops from the occupied territories (Kay, 2018).

The two sides seemed to do their utmost to find a solution suitable for both parties. The Oslo Accords of 1993 were based on the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO and established that Israel must remove all its troops within the next five years (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.24). What the Palestinian people had been fighting for during decades finally seemed to be in reach. Throughout this time, the PLO established the Palestinian Authority (PA) with ‘self-governing’ powers with Yasser Arafat as elected head of this entity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.24). In my eyes, the biggest downfall of the Oslo Accords is the fact that women were excluded from both the negotiations as well as the formation of the Palestinian Authority (Hankir, 2018).

The Oslo Accords left many details undiscussed and did not define a specific time line for actions. “The key issues such as the extent of the territories to be ceded by Israel, the nature of the Palestinian entity to be established, the future of the Israeli settlements and settlers, water rights, the resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem and the status of Jerusalem were set aside to be discussed later” (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.24). This was a huge mistake on the side of the PLO and would have detrimental consequences. Not dealing with such issues at the peak of the talks was a fatal decision by the PLO under Arafat, who accepted the incomplete agreement since they lacked support from other Arab nations and had grown weary of the increasing power of *Hamas* (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.25). Signing the Oslo Accords despite its flaws seemed to be the only way for the PLO not to lose face and to return with a victory of some sort for the Palestinian side. The demands of the Accords that Israel withdraw its men from and leave the settlements in the occupied territories should have been completed by 1999; however, Israel repeatedly delayed the process, reluctant to give up their power and influence in those territories (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.25).

It may come as no surprise, seeing the current state and relationship between Palestine and Israel, that the Oslo Accords were an absolute fail. Israel continued to build settlements in the occupied territories, and has done so up until today. "By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Palestinian Authority had direct, or partial, control of 40% of the West Bank and 65% of the Gaza Strip with Israel expanding its existing settlements, building new settlements and building roads for the settlers to travel from their homes into Israel without having to pass through Palestinian territory" (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.25). With the facts at hand, it is safe to say that nothing has changed for the Palestinian people, and the Oslo Accords were merely formal talks leading to Israel acting and doing as it pleases. Some scholars believe that if women had not be excluded from the Oslo Accords, the current state of the Palestinian people might be very different (Speri, 2019).

"There is controversy about the origin of the Intifada. Was it, as the Palestinian narrative suggests, the outcome of growing Palestinian resentment at continual Israeli provocations, from settlement building to Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount, compounded by the frustration of the failed Camp David summit and the apparent closing of a political horizon to settle the conflict with Israel? Or, as the Israeli narrative argues, was the Intifada an instrument of a deliberate Palestinian policy to discard the pre-Oslo commitment of Arafat to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to settle 'all outstanding issues' through peaceful means, and instead to use terror to extricate from Israel what could not have been achieved through negotiations, including the 'right of return' of Palestinian refugees into the state of Israel?" (Herzog, 2004, p. 2). No matter what the reasons were which led to the First *Intifada*, it was still a social movement which gave the Palestinian people hope. People from all walks of life took a part in the fight for change, to end the occupation of their territories. Due to a lack of internal social and political unity and the immense power of the Israeli State, Palestinians continue to live under the harsh rule of Israel. They have gained neither autonomy nor more rights, and the daily lives of Palestinian citizens continue to be a draining struggle.

## **9. Women of the *Intifada***

*“It is the woman who gives life, and therefore she is the most capable of defending it, the one who makes humanity go on, and this is why I am proud of being one”*- Leila Khaled (Freedom Flotilla Coalition, 2017).

The First Palestinian *Intifada* and the 2019 Lebanese Revolution were decades apart, and the basic reasons igniting both movements might have not been the same. The First *Intifada* was a movement against the occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel, and the people's demands for more rights as Palestinian citizens. The 2019 Lebanese Revolution wanted to topple the regime and demand more rights, given to all Lebanese citizens by their politicians. However, the involvement and roles of women gave these two movements common grounds. In both movements, the women fought for their country and for their rights as women. They were part of two collective identities at the same time. This chapter will discuss the involvement of women in the First Palestinian *Intifada*, following the structure of the chapter on women in the 2019 Lebanese Revolution, first discussing their role in society, followed by analyzing their political and social involvement prior to the First *Intifada* and finally discussing their partaking, demands and roles in the movement.

### **9.1 Women in Palestinian Society**

Just as is the case in many countries in the Middle East, Palestinian society is also based on a patriarchal structure, with men often playing leading roles in both the private and the public spheres. Until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, patriarchal and tribal clan structures were the basis of Palestinian society (Nusseibeh, 1997). This was the reality for many Arab nations and women living within them, as the patriarchal structures and traditions are deeply rooted (Haj-Yahia, 2005, p. 1). These structures are deeply embedded and extremely hard to change in favor of women, men being the leading force in the economic, social, religious, political and educational structures of society (Haj-Yahia, 2005, p. 1).

Although women constitute a huge part of Palestinian society, their involvement, let alone their leading, in most spheres of life is very low. Women constitute around half of the Palestinian

population, but their participation in economic and social development in Palestinian society is extremely little (Aburaida, 2021, p. 88). The involvement of women in these sectors also differs between the Palestinian territories as well as between the rural and urban areas, with women in urban areas being much more integrated and involved in the social, political and economic spheres compared with their counterparts in rural areas (Stahl, 2018). Rural areas are often more conservative and traditional and, therefore, do not want to let go of old structures and traditions, which hinders women from evolving and developing and from changing their positions in society. The customs and traditions, which are often stronger in rural areas, as well as the social oppression they face, have led to the reluctance of women in those areas to attempt to better their situation (Aburaida, 2021, p. 96). These traditions see a woman's place as bearing children and taking care of wifely duties, and not in economic and political spheres. Women are in charge of the household and raising children but, beyond these duties, do not have much to say.

The situation for women in Palestine can perhaps be seen as more complicated as that of women in Lebanon. This is due to the fact that women are not only fighting the ceiling placed upon them by their own society but also by Israel. "Relating to Israel, to date, since 1967, there have been more than 10,000 Palestinian women arrested with the majority being subjected to psychological torture and ill treatment throughout their arrest and detention, such as beatings, verbal abuse, strip searches, sexual harassment and violence" (Alsaafin, 2014). Not only do women, when detained by the Israeli military and police, face hazardous conditions but they are also mostly guarded and interrogated by male officers, something which is actually prohibited by international law. Arrested women are often interrogated by men who use patriarchal techniques in order to obtain the information they want, showing that Palestinian women have to fight two sets of patriarchal structures enforced on them: one by the Palestinian society and one by Israel (Alsaafin, 2014), an almost impossible undertaking. Women face repression from the political entities in the West Bank, by the PLO, and in Gaza, by *Hamas*, who have not yet understood that their national struggle and fight for change will never be successful unless women gain more rights and freedoms within the Palestinian society (Alsaafin, 2014).

Palestinian men must understand that the liberation of their society can not occur without the liberation of the Palestinian women (Alsaafin, 2014). Male figures in Palestinian

society may not be aware of this fact, but in order for their people to be free and emancipated, women, constituting around half of the population, must be part of that liberation. "The struggle to live through the hard times that the Palestinian people were going through has denied the Palestinian women's struggle for equality and freedom because the struggle remained within the boundaries of the national struggle which by necessity has taken precedence" (Nusseibeh, 1997). Due to the fact that Palestinian society was preoccupied with gaining freedom as a nation, the fight for women rights, which should have taken place at the same time, was not on the agenda.

The Palestinian fight for liberation has also brought about some positive aspects with regard to women's liberation and them gaining more rights. After the formation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the problems that came with it for the Palestinian people, many families were in dire need of an extra income (Nusseibeh, 1997). Many families were in need of their female counterparts to join the workforce, which meant a great deal for women and for their place in society. Society's perception of the role of the women improved in many ways due to the greater participation of women in the labor force as well as the increased level of education (Nusseibeh, 1997). Furthermore, although the patriarchal structures of the Palestinian society remained in place after the formation of the State of Israel and continue to do so today, their position in society changed through the national fight all Palestinians, including women, were a part of. Women were also a part of the national struggle, which brought the issue of female sexuality from the private sphere into the public one (Nusseibeh, 1997). Women were much more present on the streets and part of the movement alongside their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. The female sexuality of Palestinian women, an aspect which is very sacred in their society, was threatened by aspects such as the imprisonment of Palestinian women by the Israeli forces, which did not stop women from speaking up and changed the way they were seen by their society from fragile creatures into strong, capable individuals (Nusseibeh, 1997). Men were not only worried about the honor of their women, but became more and more dependant on them and needed them by their side in their national struggle. They were no longer seen as those needing to be protected, but rather as those fighting for their country. Although it might have satisfied and empowered women to be part of a national resistance, also during the *Intifada*, behind closed

doors and at the political level, women did not gain much power or more rights and they had a long way to go until they could be successful in their feminist struggle.

Women are often the backbone of social movements, and then are either written out of history or never mentioned in the first place (Hankir, 2018). Since 1948 up until today, throughout the never-ending Palestinian national movement, the First and the Second *Intifada*, women have played a huge role. However, their involvement, support, strength and power is often set aside and the glory is given to the men; if women are mentioned at all, then mostly in relation to others such as their mothers (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 54). They are not given the same recognition as their male counterparts, although their involvement is just as important. “With the story of women, even in societies that might not be as traditionally patriarchal as Palestinian society is, women generally don't get documented in protest movements, with fifty percent of the story often missing in most of these historical accounts” (Stahl, 2021). The same can be said for Palestinian women, seeing as they were part of the struggle their people had been facing for decades; they were on the streets, screaming and fighting; they were in the prison cells enduring the pain with dignity and their head held high, but at the end, they remained inferior to the men within their society. They were still treated differently by the Palestinian society, the Palestinian political entities and the Israeli Government and military. Just as was the case in Lebanon, the women of Palestine joined their national struggle, but hoped to gain more rights and freedoms for the women of their nation as part of the process.

### **9.2 Palestinian Feminist Movements Prior to the Intifada**

Despite fighting deeply-rooted patriarchal structures, for decades Palestinian women have played an integral role when it comes to resisting Israel (Alsaafin, 2014). Women have played an integral role in the fight for Palestinian freedom, even before the onset of the two *Intifadas*. Many young women have been part of the national struggle from the beginning, often alongside their husbands, fathers, or brothers (Kawar 1996). “For years before the First Intifada erupted, women were active and were organizing women’s groups, student unions and collectives, which effectively laid the groundwork for the unified struggle that emerged with the uprising” (Speri, 2019). The women who took a role in the years leading up to and during the

First *Intifada* were very different from those who had played a leading role in the past. In the past, women involved in the resistance were usually educated and urban women; however, with the *Intifada*, there was a shift, with the majority of the women involved being, often coming from refugee camps and villages (Cohoon, 2014, p. 28). It was no longer only the educated, or perhaps socially more acknowledged women, who were a part of the national movement but women from all different spheres of life. The question however prevails whether there had been any feminist movements in Palestine prior to the Palestinian *Intifada*. Although the First *Intifada* was not a feminist movement *per se*, feminist issues, as we will see later on in this chapter, were part of the agenda. Had there been any prior movement or efforts relating to the rights of women in Palestine? Had women ever been as politically involved as they were during the First *Intifada*?

The first remarkable Palestinian female political activity took place in the town of Afula, now part of Israel, in 1893, when women demonstrated against the construction of a new Jewish settlement, and although this was not feminist in essence, it was the first visible political involvement of Palestinian women (Alsaafin, 2014). Under the Ottoman and the British rule, Arab women began to organize themselves in their communities' structures for social and political mobilization (Marteu, 2012). The British mandate era, which was from 1917 until 1948, was an important time for women's political and social involvement. The establishment of charitable organizations, an increase of social work, as well as their political participation in demonstrations all happened at that time. "Following the killing of nine Palestinian women in the 1929 Western Wall riots in Jerusalem, the first Arab Women's Association was formed, in addition to the Arab Women's Union, which embarked on several economic, social, cultural, and national efforts, such as planning and organizing demonstrations and writing letters to Arab leaders to support Palestinian people" (Alsaafin, 2014). It is vital here again to point out that no specifically feminist issues part of the agenda, but the mere fact that women were gaining a voice and were becoming more visible in the social, political and economic spheres in itself was a great achievement for their cause.

Women's movements after 1948 were, for the most part, connected to the PLO and its various factions. In 1965, the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) was created, which

functioned as a charitable association, led by women from the privileged classes under the authorization and leadership of the PLO's nationalist project (Marteu, 2012). Palestinian feminism, which slowly developed and evolved in the 1970s, was always anchored in the relationship between the battle of gender and nationalism (Marteu, 2012). It continued to be a national fight; however, the involvement of women and the roles they played allowed them to alter the way they were perceived by their male counterparts, the Palestinian political organizations and Israel. The different Palestinian women's associations present at the time were directly linked to the respective political movements, while at the same time being active in a large charitable and mutual assistance network (Marteu, 2012). They entered new spheres, such as the political one, while at the same time still fulfilling their traditional roles as mothers, sisters, wives and daughters, and many women entered the political field through the extension of their domestic as well as social responsibilities (Marteu, 2012).

"If feminist impetuses and desires appeared in the ranks of some Arab activists wishing to work side by side with men, it was not until the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in the Palestinian territories, that a real process of feminist empowerment critical of the nationalist movement could be observed" (Marteu, 2012). It was at that time that women not solely took part in the national movement, but also set a more feminist tone to their demands. The end of the 1970s was marked by the rising engagement of more women in the Palestinian nationalist struggle as well as the formation of associations working on solely women's issues (Marteu, 2012). A new generation of young women activists formed grassroots committees and movements in both Palestinian territories, which included volunteers work committees, trade and student unions, youth movements and centers for health education (Nusseibeh, 1997). What was different with these committees was that they no longer simply focused on the issue of freeing their people from Israeli oppression, but on empowering Palestinian women as well. "In 1978 militants and students from Ramallah, in the West Bank, created the Women's Work Committee and began to mobilize around the issue of women's work, the unrecognized work of women in agriculture, female students, and housewives" (Hiltermann 1991, 132). Palestinian women displayed their desire to promote women's rights not by ignoring or letting go of the national struggle, but by incorporating their own struggle into the national one (Marteu, 2012).

Although women have increased their presence in the political and social field, the national Palestinian struggle continues to outshine their fight. Committees and organizations relating to the nation's struggles and issues of Palestinian women did exist prior to the First *Intifada*. However, it was not until the First *Intifada* that women became such an integral part of the movement and without whom the movement would have not been the same.

### **9.3 Women Partaking in the *Intifada***

Michael Collon, a journalist specializing in techniques of ideological manipulation used in the media, pointed out that the occupation of Palestine is "the last act of colonialism in the world" (Freedom Flotilla Coalition, 2017). In the late 1980s, Palestinian people united with the aim of expelling their so called "colonizer" once and for all and to gain back control over the occupied territories. From 1987 to 1992, the Palestinian *Intifada* was characterized and known as a movement, with the aim to regain national self-determination for all Palestinian people (Cphoon, 2014). The movement is a vital part of Palestinian history, also because such a high number of women partook in it (Cphoon, 2014, p. 6). What set the uprising apart from previous ones was the fact that people from all parts of Palestinian society took a part in it and, even more, that such a high and diverse group of women played a huge role in it (Cphoon, 2014, p. 7). Mothers, daughters, sisters and even grandmothers from all classes joined their people's fight for freedom. As will be shown in the section relating to their roles within the First *Intifada*, women not only joined the movement but were actually part of those leading it. They did not stand on the sidelines, watching from a distance, but actively shaped and led the movement. Women had a clear goal in mind and knew exactly what they wanted and what had to be done in order to bring justice to their people (Hatuqa, 2021).

Women partaking in the *Intifada* no longer were only educated and young ones, but came from refugee camps and villages and included women who were old and frail (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 49). "The early days of the uprising in the occupied territories yielded striking images of Palestinian women marching in the streets, schoolgirls throwing stones at soldiers, older women carrying baskets of stones on their heads to supply younger demonstrators and women arguing and tussling with the authorities to release arrested boys" (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 48).

Even women who did not take to the streets found other ways to help. One must keep in mind that, unlike the 2019 Lebanese Revolution, the First Palestinian *Intifada* was embedded in all aspects of life. It did not merely consist of protests, sit-ins, demonstrations or such events, but was present in every part of Palestinian life. In all these aspects, which affected daily life, such as the boycotting of goods or the creation of farming coops, women played a huge role (Bacha, 2017). The First *Intifada* did not last five years because of young men throwing stones at tanks. “It lasted five years because there was an organising structure of civil disobedience and the creation of parallel institutions of power that really removed the control of the Israeli occupation over the Palestinian population effectively, without yet the existence of a Palestinian government, which could be done because women were at the helm” (Hankir, 2018).

For women, it was not only a national struggle for liberation, but one to gain more political and social rights within the Palestinian society. It seemed as though they had gained some political power during the Madrid Talks, which had been the first attempt to find a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli problem in the *Intifada*, where esteemed women, such as Zahira Kamal, who was very active in organizing parts of the *Intifada*, were invited to be a part of the solution (Hankir, 2018). Although the Madrid Talks did not end the First *Intifada*, they were a victory for women in the sense that women were acknowledged and invited to be part of the solution (Bacha, 2017). The Oslo Accords, however, which so-to-say ended the First *Intifada*, were signed in secret with the PLO representing Palestine and the complete absence of women. Despite being part of the Palestinian delegation in Madrid and having played such an important role in the *Intifada*, women were completely excluded from the Oslo negotiations and from the following formation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) (Hankir, 2018). It goes to show that their struggle within Palestinian society as well as under the Israeli control was by no means over and that they were far from gaining the same rights and freedoms as their fellow male counterparts. Julia Bacha, the director of the 2017 film “Naila and Uprising”, has repeatedly outed her opinion on the exclusion of women in the Oslo Accords, where, according to her, had women been invited, Palestine would be in a completely different state today (Speri, 2019).

#### **9.4 Women and their Demands**

The demands of the women within the First *Intifada* of 1987 were similar to those of the women in the 2019 Lebanese Revolution. In both movements, the women fought for both their nation's struggle as well as their struggle as women in their societies. Gender was a vital part of the movement, because not only did Palestinian women live under occupation, but they were also treated very differently in Palestinian society in comparison to men (Cohoon, 2014, p. 18). The demands of women concerned Palestinian people under Israeli occupation in general and women as an entity which was often seen as inferior to their male counterparts in the patriarchal society they lived in.

Women not only fought for the freedom and liberation of their country, but also for the liberation of Palestinian women because they felt that they could not be free as women unless they lived in a free country, and the other way around, the two going hand in hand with one another (Bacha, 2017). Their demands covered gender liberation in Palestinian society and national liberation from Israeli occupation. Women were certain that their people could not be completely free unless women were part of that equation. Although national liberation was at the top of the agenda, feminism was a secondary issue to the Palestinian women and the committees they formed (Cohoon, 2014, p. 18). The national struggle might have taken precedence as there could be no free women without a free nation, but feministic issues were a priority for women too and, unlike men, women were fully part of both collective identities. Palestinian women demanded more rights within society, to alter their position in society and more political and social power (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 51). They used the platform they had gained from the *Intifada* to incorporate their feminist issues and demands. They used the *Intifada*, and the voice they had gained through it, to incorporate change for them as a group and to include their demands on the agenda of the general movement (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 52).

Many accounts suggest that the *Intifada* enabled Palestinian women to make great strides towards their social as well as political liberation by giving them a platform to alter both the position of their nation in relation to Israel as well as their place in society (Hammami,

1990). It allowed them to realize that they had the same abilities as men and that their voices were just as powerful (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 52). Throughout the years leading up to and during the *Intifada*, a plethora of women's committees and organizations, which have already been partly mentioned and will be discussed in further detail later, were created. "These committees sought to integrate their knowledge base as a tool to aid the uprising in hopes of obtaining Palestinian nationhood as well as obtaining more rights for Palestinian women" (Cohoon, 2014). These committees empowered women to partake in the national struggle, which indirectly helped their feminist cause. The first committee was founded in Ramallah, in the West Bank, in the late 1970s, and its goal was to "train and assist women to be more useful to themselves and to society" (Cohoon, 2014, p. 11). Although these committees often acted individually, they all worked towards the same end goal, namely, to create a linkage between gender liberation and the possibility of a progressive and democratic future, where all individuals living within Palestinian territories would enjoy the same rights (Hammami, 1990). The demands were for the creation of a free Palestine and for more rights and liberties for women in Palestinian society, and for a shift in the way they were perceived and treated. "One of these committee's most ambitious projects and demands was a draft Women's Bill of Rights, which was seen as a mobilizing tool to show the interests and strength of women prior to the introduction of key pieces of legislation, like a constitution" (Giacaman & Johnson, 1994, p. 25). Such steps were necessary if the demands of Palestinian women were to be met, not only the demands for their country but for them as women.

### **9.5 Women and their Roles in the Intifada**

Similarly to the women in the Lebanese Revolution, the women of the First *Intifada* also played a variety of roles in the uprising from the very beginning. "They actively participated in the demonstrations and in the stone throwing, they broke the taboos of women being physically involved in the political arena and they were beaten, imprisoned, tortured, and killed by Israeli soldiers" (Nusseibeh, 1997). Although their roles in the resistance might at times be systematically hidden, they were an integral part to the movement and proved that women stand at the frontline when it comes to the defense of the Palestinian people, despite the various internal and external factors prohibiting them from doing so at times (Freedom Flotilla

Coalition, 2017). They stood at the front line of the conflict, ready to make sacrifices so that their children may have a better future than them. Most of these women were born under the occupation, meaning that they have lived under it for their entire lives and were ready for a change to happen politically as well as for a change of their status as women in society (Farhat-Naser, 2009, p.103).

The various roles women played within the resistance will be discussed below, grouped into the following four categories: women made the protests more peaceful, women used confrontational methods against the occupation, women were drivers of political activism and civic engagement, and women took on the roles of men in society.

*Women made the protests more peaceful*

Palestinian society being patriarchal, women are seen as more fragile subjects which cannot be treated the same as men when it comes to the usage of force. Women used this position in their society to make the protests more peaceful. The main tactic used by women in the *Intifada* were peaceful protests (Bacha, 2009). The presence and involvement of women allowed the *Intifada* to be non-violent, for the most part. Women were firm believers that if they were to be successful, the process must remain as peaceful as possible (Bacha, 2017).

Women used their bodies to protect men as women were less likely to be attacked by male soldiers due to their gender (Al Jazeera, 2014). Not only did women make the actual protests peaceful, they also protected their male counterparts from any possible aggression by Israeli soldiers. “Eine Frau, eine ‚schwache Kreatur‘, zu attackieren hätten die Soldaten als Verletzung ihrer Männlichkeit empfunden. Hätte ein Mann dasselbe gewagt, wäre er vermutlich sogleich erschossen worden“ (Farhat-Naser, 2009, p.143). Sumaya Farhat-Naser wrote this quote in her book ‘Thymian und Steine’, in which she discusses her life from the moment of birth in Palestine in 1948. The quote relays the fact that an Israeli soldier would not attack a woman, the way he would a man, because it would hurt their manhood. If a man had approached a male soldier and entered his personal space, as many women did throughout the *Intifada*, it would certainly have led to an escalation between the two men.

The First *Intifada* ushered in a popular grassroots resistance to the violence of the Israeli occupation. Women were standing hand in hand with men, taking part in demonstrations and protests, and through their involvement often ensured men were not getting arrested or beat up by the Israeli army (Alsaafin, 2014). If soldiers tried to use force on the male protestors or attempted to arrest them, women interfered and attempted to deescalate the situation, knowing they would most probably not face the same sort of violence. This tactic was very successful at times, and allowed the First *Intifada* to remain peaceful for most of the time. Women felt that they had to protect young men from getting arrested because they “consider any man arrested or injured as one of their sons and try to rescue him” (Cohoon, 2014, p. 15). They were the mothers, sisters, daughters and grandmothers protecting their fathers, brothers, husbands and children from any violence which might have been executed by the Israeli military. If women had not been present in such high numbers, the *Intifada* might have been marked with much more violence and blood.

*Women used confrontational methods against the occupation*

Although one of the most important roles of Palestinian women in the *Intifada* was to make it more peaceful, women also participated in the usage of confrontational methods. As mentioned earlier, in comparison with the Second *Intifada*, the first one was much more peaceful, but it was not completely without violence. Occasional confrontations between Palestinian protestors and the Israeli army did occur and women were part of them. “The early days of the uprising in the occupied territories yielded striking images of Palestinian women marching in the streets, schoolgirls throwing stones at soldiers and older women carrying baskets of stones on their heads” (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 48). Palestinians used force mainly by throwing stones or using their bodies to fight, but more often had to defend themselves from Israeli soldiers. Although women were known to deescalate confrontations between the two parties, they were also those bringing the stones to the men and at times even threw them at the soldiers.

Women, throughout the First *Intifada*, also used confrontational methods as their male counterparts. “A middle-aged woman in Ramallah helps young men build a barricade, a woman

in Aida camp fights and even bites a soldier who is trying to take her son, women in Gaza carry trays full of rocks on their heads to supply the demonstrators, women in camps under extended curfew defy the military to smuggle food and fuel into the camp” (Cohoon, 2014, p. 24).

Although it might be utopian to believe that such a movement could be successful without the use of any force or confrontational method, this is often not the case, and often some sort of violence is inevitable when achieving such a goal. Women, at times, aided their male counterparts by bringing them tools, such as rocks, to use against the soldiers, by using those tools themselves, and by using force, such as biting or hitting soldiers, in order to protect male protestors from being arrested. Women’s committees as well as common women were also, at times, involved in confrontational methods. During the *Intifada*, various women’s committees engaged in political and public tactics such as “throwing stones, burning tires, transporting and preparing stones, building roadblocks” (Cohoon, 2014, p. 10). While they were those often making the movement more peaceful, they would, at times, also aid the men in the usage of confrontational methods.

#### *Women took on the roles of men in society*

During the years leading up to the First *Intifada* as well as during it, many Palestinian men were no longer present in the Palestinian territories. Because of their political involvement in the resistance, they were either deported, in exile or in jail, forcing women to take on the roles of men, while at the same time continuing to play their roles in society (Bacha, 2017). Women were now forced to take on more responsibilities as many male family members were no longer physically present.

Although circumstances were not ideal, the absence of so many men allowed women to become more powerful within the Palestinian society, and women quickly came to realize that they had the same abilities as men and were by no means dependant on them (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 52). Not only were high numbers of men physically absent, many were unemployed, which forced women to take on more responsibilities and pushed them into the labor market. This development during the First *Intifada* gave women much more strength and importance

within their society, since women who can work and have their own income will become more empowered and stronger (Bacha, 2017).

Sadly, this wave of women empowerment and increased responsibility within Palestinian society came to a halt once men either started to return to Palestine or be released from jail. “With the end of the Intifada and the advent of the peace process, the gains that the Palestinian women have achieved were being questioned and threatened. For coming out of the Israeli prison, thousands of men are again requiring their wives, daughters, and sisters to go back to the old social role. Men are afraid that these newly gained freedoms might threaten their position in the household and society” (Nusseibeh, 1997). As long as the mindset and mentality of Palestinian men in particular and Palestinian society in general does not change, women in their struggle for more power and independence will keep finding the same obstacles on their way.

#### *Women were drivers of political activism and civic engagement*

One can say that the most prominent role of women in the First Palestinian *Intifada* was their political and civic engagement. Throughout the uprising, women were drivers of political activism and civic engagement, not only being a part of it, but often being the ones organizing the various events and protests. “While the First Intifada is largely reduced to images of Palestinian boys throwing stones at Israeli tanks, women were at the helm of resistance. Women launched mass demonstrations, labor strikes, and a boycott of Israeli goods that for the first time put real economic and international pressure on Israel to negotiate. At the same time, they created parallel institutions that lowered the costs of the uprising on Palestinians” (Speri, 2019). From organizing demonstrations to boycotting Israeli goods, organizing labor strikes and aiding their fellow Palestinians in everyday tasks, women were present and active everywhere in the political sphere of the movement. Throughout the *Intifada*, mosques were often the place where the organizational work of women took place (Al- Charif, 2020).

Not only were women heavily involved in the political aspect of the movement through the organization of demonstrations, peace talks and other non-violent forms of resistance, but they were also those ensuring that everything behind the scenes went smoothly. They created

mobile health clinics and underground schools, handed out food and any other essentials to ensure the well-being of Palestinian citizens throughout the times of the *Intifada*. They maintained the uprising while at the same time generating female self-sufficiency (Bouarrouj, 2018). Their civic engagement kept the movement going, which was extremely important. It was the women who dealt with every aspect of daily life, and it was also them who ensured that the Palestinian people did not lack anything they needed to continue living a 'normal' life (Nusseibeh, 1997).

The civic engagement and politic activism of women happened, for the most part, through a variety of women organizations and committees working in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "The first women's committee created in 1978, in Ramallah, West Bank, was a result of the fact that much of the middle class and none of the lower class Palestinian women could join the pre-existing women's charitable societies, suggesting that class was a decision factor for the creation of the first women's committee, which was not the case in the Intifada, were women from all spheres of life joined the fight" (Cohoon, 2014, p. 3). From the early days of the uprising, women's activism was partly spontaneous and partly organized by the four women's committees, which together constituted the modern women's movement in the occupied territories. These committees all grew out of the Women's Work Committee, formed in the late 1970s to support the Palestinian national movement (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 49).

"In the early 1980s, the Women's Work Committee was split up into four separate entities, which were each furthermore composed of different smaller organizations. These were; the Federation of Palestinian Women's Action Committees (FPWAC), the Union of Palestinian Working Women's Committees (UPWWC), the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC), and finally, the Women's Committee for Social Work (WCSW)" (Julia Bacha, 2017). As I mentioned earlier, these committees were in direct relation to the various 'male' Palestinian political organizations. The largest of the organizations were the FPWAC, which identifies with the political programme of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the UPWWC, which leans toward the Palestine Communist Party. These are followed by the UPWC, which is in relation to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and last but not least, the WCSW, which in direct relation to *Fatah*

(Hiltermann, 1991, p. 50). Although the various organizations and entities making up these four committees as well as the committees themselves were separate entities, the Palestinian *Intifada* led to the “unification” of the committees, since they were all part of the ‘national’ as well as the ‘female collective identity’ (Cohoon, 2014, p. 32)

These entities aided in the national struggle, empowered Palestinian women and aided them in obtaining more rights in society (NGO Monitor, 2020). The various organizations which made up the four women’s committees were integral for the Palestinian fight as well as for the fight of women. The various women's organizations were an integral part of the committees since they were not only politically active but also the ones helping with every aspect of daily life (Nusseibeh, 1997). “For example, the women's committees began to establish women's productive cooperatives in response to the food shortages caused by army curfews and the boycott of Israeli products” (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 51). The women within these committees aimed to improve the lives of their communities, and especially that of Palestinian women. (Cohoon, 2014, p. 13). They ensured that children continued going to school, that families had enough to eat and that women were being empowered within and through the *Intifada*. “Regardless of the women’s committee’s factional divisions, their goals and activities were consistent with one another, because they all stressed the well being of their society in general, education and vocational training for women, and the need for productive work, as well as having an emphasis on housewives becoming productive members of society” (Cohoon, 2014, p. 14).

The roles of these women committees were not only found in the social and civic spheres, but also in the political one. Throughout the uprising, the women committees did not only organize various events, including marches, but were often those at the frontline themselves (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 51). During the *Intifada*, it was them who engaged in political and public tactics such as “throwing stones, burning tires, transporting and preparing stones, building roadblocks” (Cohoon, 2014, p. 10). They were often those leading the boycotting of Israeli events, but at the same time were the ones finding alternative products for the Palestinian people to purchase (Bacha, 2017). Women in general, and more specifically the committees which they themselves created, were leaders of the politics of the *Intifada*. Being

present in and leading demonstrations, sit-ins, roadblocks, marches, boycotts and peace talks amplified their role as political activists and leaders throughout the *Intifada*.

The increasing involvement of women in the political and social spheres of society was an integral part to the national fight as well as their own female struggle. It became evident that women were able not only to be a part of the movement but that, when given the chance, were able to take on leading roles and be able to play a huge part in the political sphere, while at the same time ensuring self-sufficiency and the continuation of a 'normal' daily life (Bouarrouj, 2018).

## **10. Comparing the Roles of Women in Both Movements**

“The most recent Arab revolutions have been received differently by different people, according to their subjectivities and perspectives and their expectations of what these revolutions would mean to their lives. While some expect only to be rid of the previous authoritarian regime, others redefine not only political but also social and gender roles” (Al-Natour, 2012). Women involved in the 2019 Lebanese Revolution and the First Palestinian *Intifada* partook in the ‘national collective identity’, as part of which both men and women attempted to change the regimes governing them: the Government and elites in the case of Lebanon and the Israeli Government and occupation in the case of Palestine. Parallel thereto, women in both movements also created a ‘female collective identity’, through which they attempted to alter the patriarchal structures of their societies and gain more rights as women.

During the last two centuries, women have been a part of a plethora of social movements and even created their own movements, and the roles they played were often different to those played by men (Saha, 2015). The involvement of women in social movements is often different to that of men; and the two movements at hand are examples that women often fight at more than one front. Often, women’s movements are seen as a bigger threat, as they oppose those in power at the political as well as the feminist level (Al-Natour, 2012). In both the 2019 Lebanese Revolution and the First Palestinian *Intifada*, women played a major role and aided the national as well as the female cause. They took to the streets due to the same reasons as all the other participants, but at the same time women in both nations demanded more rights for themselves as separate entity. Although they often stood side by side with their male counterparts, women played different, additional roles. These precise roles were discussed above for each movement individually. Now the question is: Can comparisons be drawn between the roles played by the women of the Lebanese Revolution and the Palestinian *Intifada*?

### **Women made the protests more peaceful**

Many studies have proven the fact that the correlation between women’s movements and non-violence is very strong (Costain, 2000, p.175). Furthermore, research has proven that,

when women are not only involved in social movements, but take on leading roles, the chance of violent outbreaks is even lower (Hankir, 2018). There is a positive correlation between high numbers of women participating in social movements and non-violence. “Furthermore, there is overwhelming quantitative evidence that women’s empowerment and gender equality are associated with peace and stability in society, particularly when women influence decisions about war and peace, it is more likely crises will be resolved without recourse to violence” (O'Reilly, 2015). This correlation can also be seen in the two movements discussed in this thesis. In both the 2019 Lebanese Revolution as well as the First Palestinian *Intifada*, women brought a more peaceful touch to the movements, and used their bodies to protect the male participants and to maintain the peace between them and the soldiers. This, to me, is the most striking similarity between these two movements. In most scholarly documents relating to the roles and involvement of women within these two movements, much emphasis is placed on their role as peacemakers during the protests and overall movements.

In the Lebanese case, women made the revolution more peaceful in a variety of ways: they were those preventing street fights among the protesters, they were the ones who stood on the frontlines, and they were the ones who formed human shields in order to protect their fellow protestors (Humran, 2020, p. 30). The same can be said for the Palestinian *Intifada*. Women were the ones ensuring that the movement stayed as peaceful as possible. Clearly, in both cases, clashes and spurs of violence occurred, but for the most part women did their utmost to keep the situation as passive as possible. Within the First *Intifada*, it was the women who used their bodies to keep the protests as peaceful as possible and to ensure that no protestor was beaten or arrested by the Israeli police force (Alsaafin, 2014).

Palestinian and Lebanese women alike used their roles in society to their advantage with regard to this point. Since both countries are led by men and based on patriarchal structures, women are not treated the same and are often seen as fragile objects who need protection, which in this instance they used to their advantage (Nusseibeh, 1997). Violence by the police or army, in both the Palestinian and Lebanese case, will not be used against women the way it might be against men. The women of both movements were aware of this reaction and used it to protect their male counterparts and made the protests less violent in general.

*Women were drivers of political activism and civic engagement*

Another common role of women in both the Lebanese Revolution and the Palestinian *Intifada* was that of drivers of political activism and civic engagement. In both movements, women played a huge role in the organization of events. They were not simply involved in the movements, but often led the way in both the national struggle and in the separate struggle as women. The fact that women in the two countries are often sidelined could not stop them, and they continued to play a major role in leading and organizing the two movements.

At this point, it is important to mention Maxine Molyneux's differentiation between various forms of transmissions of authority when it comes to political activism. She differentiates between "independent, associational and directed, corresponding to the lines of authority which have crystalized in relation to female activism" (Molyneux, 1998). According to Molyneux, the first is characterized by independent actions, where women set their own goals and take all their own decisions when it comes to the organization of movements. The second type Molyneux discusses is the associational form, in which women's organizations are independent but at the same time form alliances with other political organizations (Molyneux, 1998). This type allows women to have power over their own organizations and decisions while at the same time forming alliances which can be vital for their success. The third and final type she discusses is the directed transmission of authority, where authority and orders come from outside, meaning that the collective identity of women is led by a higher authority.

In the case of the two movements at hand, I argue that the second type, the associational form or organization is applicable in relation to the political involvement and activism of women. Although both the Lebanese and Palestinian women created their own collective identity in order to fight for their feminist issues, it is evident that the decisions they made were at times influenced by other entities. In the case of Palestine, women did create their own organizations and committees; however, these were often in direct relation with the various Palestinian political organizations and factions, mainly led by men. Women were a part of the 'national collective identity' and created their own 'female collective identity'. However, their political involvement and decisions were at times influenced by outside parties. In the Lebanese and Palestinian case alike, it would be wrong to say that the political involvement of

women in the struggles was completely free from any sort of external influence, or that there was a complete lack of boundaries.

As seen in the previous sections pertaining to the roles of women within the two movements, one can see that women played an increasing part in political activism. In the case of the Palestinian *Intifada*, women became more vocal in their demands and took on leading roles in organizing the movement (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 48). Through the creation of a plethora of organizations and institutions, which have been previously discussed, women were drivers of political activism as well as civic engagement. They were not only highly politically involved, through organizing demonstrations, protests and other such aspects, they were also social and emotional caretakers, ensuring the well-being of their fellow citizens. They played leading roles both on and off stage.

The exact same can be said about the women of the 2019 Lebanese Revolution. Their political and civic engagements were one of the most important roles they played. "At the front of the marches and educational lectures, organizing sit-ins and human barricades, planning demonstrations were the women who have been an important motivating leading force behind the revolution" (Zrein, 2020, p. 61). Not only were they highly present, they led and organized many aspects of the revolution both on the streets and behind closed doors. Furthermore, women provided food, childcare and many other forms of support so the protests could continue and the movement would not lose momentum.

It is important to mention at this point that it would be wrong to say that women were the only ones organizing and leading the movement. It would be unfair to the many who took part in both of these movements. However, what is striking in the First *intifada* and the 2019 Lebanese Revolution alike is that it was the women who mainly took care of the civic side of things. Although men and women organized and participated in the various protests, demonstrations, sit-ins and other such actions of the movements, it was the women who mainly took care of the 'daily aspects'. They were, for the most part, the ones handing out food, they were the ones taking care of the children while everyone was on the streets; in short, they ensured that life could go on as 'usual'. Without this caring role of women, both movements might have ended much earlier.

## **11. Conclusion**

Social movements, in all their forms, are a vital aspect when a group of people seek change. Whether it is an uprising, a revolution or simply a demonstration, what all these movements have in common is the people's demand for change. This was also the case in both the 2019 Lebanese Revolution as well as the First Palestinian *Intifada*. What is striking in the two movements at hand is that it was as though both social movements were occurring at the same time. In Lebanon and Palestine alike, women were part of two collective identities and fought at two fronts at the same time. On the one hand, they were part of the national struggle against those in power, in the Lebanese case the Government, and in the Palestinian case the Israeli oppression. On the other hand, the women created a second collective identity through which they wanted to alter their place in society and gain more rights in the patriarchal structures which were their reality. Just as was the case in the Iranian revolution, mentioned earlier in this paper, "misogynous laws, systematic violence, hostile patriarchal structures, discrimination in the public and private spheres, harassment and imprisonment" were only a few of the aspects Lebanese and Palestinian women attempted to alter (Sheibani, 2009)

Although at times it seemed that women took on a mostly supportive role, by carrying out 'traditional' tasks that were expected of them, they made it clear in both movements that they were capable of more than that (Phillips, 2014, p. 415). The roles which women played in both these movements, at their times, portrayed the fact that Arab women are capable of having a voice and for demanding a change and shift in the patriarchal structures of their countries (Al- Natour, 2012). Through their high presence and involvement, it became evident that women were stronger, louder and more capable than many men within their societies believed them to be. Although it was not always easy for women, they continued to play huge roles in both movements, two of which can be compared. In both the 2019 Lebanese Revolution as well as the First Palestinian *Intifada*, the most striking roles women played were that they made the movements more peaceful and that they were drivers of political and civic engagement. Feminist engagement continued to grow and led to the creation of workshops, public discussions, among others, in spite of the resistance facing them (Bojan Bilic, 2012, p.609). They organized events, demonstrations, protests and sit-ins, and at the same time were

those who ensured everyone was fed and taken care of. Furthermore, as already mentioned, research on this topic continues to relay the fact that when women are involved in movements, they tend to keep them more peaceful (Dore-Weeks et al., 2019, p. 9). In both movements discussed, it was the women who ensured that violence stayed an exception, to keep casualties as low as possible and continuously used their bodies to do so (Bojan Bilic, 2012, p.613).

The question at hand now is, whether the movements were successful and whether something changed for women. I argue that both movements are ‘tipping point revolutions’, “without long-term basis in the structural factors that bring state breakdown, are only moderately successful at best; and they often fall short even of modest changes, devolving into destructive civil wars, or outright failure to change the regime at all” (Collins, 2013). Both the 2019 Lebanese Revolution as well as the First Palestinian *Intifada* attempted to bring down those governing them. Collins argues that in such revolutions or social movements, the chances of success are very rare. Furthermore, one must look at the concept of collective identity to see whether these movements were successful. Bojan Bilic, argues that a consistent collective identity, which “informs the group’s resource mobilization and strategic options, holds the key to the surprising survival and success of a social movement” (Bojan Bilic, 2012, p.607). In the movements at hand not only were there two collective identities at the same time, but at times disagreements and problems occurred within the collective identities, especially in the ‘national collective identity’. This can be seen in the Palestinian case in events such as the Oslo Accords, when, as mentioned previously, only a part of the collective took it upon themselves to end the *Intifada*.

It is near to impossible for a revolution or any social movement to be successful, if it is a tipping point revolution but more importantly if fractions occur within the collective identity of the movement. When looking at both countries today, it is very evident that the movements were not a success, or at least a complete success. In the case of Lebanon, the current economic crisis, the 2020 August Port Explosion and the ever worsening political situation are only a few points which relay to the fact that the 2019 Lebanese Revolution did not bring about much change (Dore-Weeks, 2019). Although, as mentioned previously, small successes, such as the fact that the Prime Minister resigned or that people from all different religions and sects stood

hand in hand with one another can be seen as small successes. However, in the greater scheme of things one would be foolish to say that the Lebanese Revolution achieved what it was fighting for. In the case of the Palestinian *Intifada*, the same can be said. Minor successes might have been on the agenda, but when looking at the current state of Palestine, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, not much has changed for the Palestinian people. What the *Intifada* did was to show Israel and the world that the Palestinian people have a voice and are not afraid to use it, and that peaceful movements are possible in the worst of circumstances.

What about the women? Did something change in the lives of Palestinian and Lebanese women? Was the collective identity they created and the roles they played able to change something in their lives? Sadly, one cannot see an immense change in favor of women in both movements. In the Lebanese case, women did not gain many rights after the end of the Revolution. The patriarchal structures they attempted to shatter are still in place. What they did however achieve was to make themselves more visible in society. Their roles throughout the Revolution were of such importance that it became evident that they are an integral part of the Lebanese society. It became evident that they are not fragile creatures who need to be protected, but rather strong and powerful and absolutely capable of standing up for themselves and take care of themselves and others. Furthermore, the Revolution gave women confidence, which they had been lacking for decades.

The Palestinian scenario is different for two main reasons. First, the Palestinian *Intifada* happened four decades ago; and second, an external party, Israel, plays such an important and dominant role in every aspect of the life of Palestinian people. As in Lebanon, Palestinian women during the *Intifada*, due to the absence of so many of their men, learned to take matters into their own hands and grew strong. After the Oslo Accords, men who had been previously exiled or imprisoned returned to their homes and were often not amused with the responsibilities and power their wives, daughters, sisters and mothers had gained (Nusseibeh, 1997). Although women played such an integral role during the movement, they were often not acknowledged for their involvement when matters returned back to 'normal' and placed back in the box the patriarchal society had put them in (Alsaafin, 2014). "Despite women's activism, their social and political position in society had remained essentially the same. Still, it would be

wrong to dismiss totally the *Intifada*'s implications for women; women's awareness of their rights has been significantly enhanced, and more women than ever before have been mobilized- beyond their participation in demonstrations-in organizational structures channel- ling their energies towards satisfying the needs of a society under siege" (Hiltermann, 1991, p. 48). What is most important is the fact that in both movements, women were starting to address the problems they were facing as women, within their society, which was a step in the right direction

Although women did not achieve all they set out to, one can not call their participation in the *Intifada* a complete fail. It allowed them to realize that they are not dependant on men, that they can survive on their own and that they can be a part of the political as well as the economic sphere. This can be seen in their strong involvement of the continued fight against the Israeli occupation. "Women are seen on the front lines daily on social media platforms, posting videos under a variety of hashtags, like #SaveSheikhJarrah, are going live on Facebook or Instagram and are part of continuing demonstrations and civil society groups" (Hatuqa, 2021). What the *Intifada* has given them is the strength and courage to continue fighting hand in hand with men for the sake of the Palestinian liberation and, on their own, the patriarchal structures of their society. For example, *Tal'at*, which is a Palestinian political feminist movement, made it their aim to end femicide, domestic violence, sexism and exploitation of women of their society, while at the same time stating that Palestinian national liberation cannot occur without women (Hatuqa, 2021). Although women might have not achieved all which they set out to, the fact that women such as Ahed Tamimi have become symbols of Palestinian resistance in itself is a success. Palestinian and Lebanese women might not have been completely successful in enforcing their feminist agenda and altering their status in the patriarchal societies they live in, but what they have achieved through the 'female collective identities' they created, is the fact that they have given themselves a face and a voice.

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