

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

Palestinian Women in Writing and Poetry

Dr. Suad Joseph, General Editor

Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Women and Gender Studies, University of California, Davis

EWIC Staff: Datasheet

- ❖ After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, a “feminist” phase of Palestinian women’s writing emerged in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that focused on the problem of the Palestinian woman along with the interconnections between the woman’s problem and the national one.¹
- ❖ Since the early twentieth century, Palestinian women such as Sadiyah Nasar, Salma al-Nasr, and Mary Sarruf Shahhada wrote articles, essays, speeches, and stories for the radio that contributed to the emergence of ‘radio literature.’²
- ❖ Along with essays, prominent writers of the 1940s such as Asma Tubi, Hadiya ‘Abd al-Hadi, and Najwa Kawar Farah, contributed to the emergence of short stories; however, Palestinian women made only modest achievements in the short story in the period before the 1948 Nakba.²
- ❖ Starting in the 1930-40s, a growing number of journals, such as *Al-Arab* and *al-Hilal*, began publishing the works of many Palestinian women poets; and in the 1970s, a generation of Palestinian women novelists emerged.²³
- ❖ A growing number of Palestinian women writers began publishing their literary works during the Intifada; due to the grassroots nature of the Intifada, Palestinian culture, especially the experiences of Palestinian women, became more accessible at this time.⁴
- ❖ Through their works, renowned Palestinian writers like Sahar Khalifeh and Raymonda Tawil illustrate the similarities between the oppression experienced as a result of occupation and the oppression of women within a patriarchal culture; ultimately, this exhibits the double burden that women must face under occupation. They are both among the founders of the Arab Women’s Union, which was formally established after the 1967 invasion (its Bethlehem branch was founded in 1947) for displaced villagers.⁵⁶
- ❖ Established and directed by the Palestinian poet, editor, and translator Salma Khadra Jayyusi, the Project for Translation from Arabic (PROTA), has helped to translate the works of Palestinian women writers.⁷
- ❖ From 1948-1978, 1 out of the 25 published Palestinian novels were written by women. From 1980-1997, this number significantly increased as women wrote 5 out of the 31 published novels. Some of the most notable Palestinian women novelists of this time period include Liana Badr, Suad Amiri, Adania Shibli, and Naomi Shihab Nye.⁸

¹ Hafez, Sabry. 1994. “Women’s Narrative in Modern Arabic Literature.” In: ALLEN et al. 1994: 160-65

² Ghazoul, Ferial. 2008. “Arab Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide, 1873-1999.

³ Jayyusi Khadra, Salma. 1992. “Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature.”

⁴ Moors, Annelies. 1995. “Discourse and Palestine: Power, Text, and Context.”

⁵ Sabaggh, Suha. 1989. “Palestinian Women Writers and the Intifada.”

⁶ <http://www.bethawu.org/>

⁷ <https://www.solidarity-us.org/node/803>

Taha, Ibrahim. 2013. “The Palestinian Novel: A Communication Study.