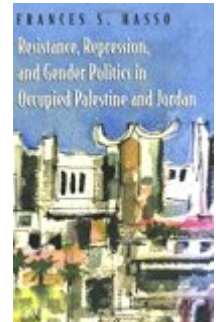


Frances Hasso. *Resistance, Repression, and Gender Politics in Occupied Palestine and Jordan.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005. ix + 231 pp. \$24.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8156-3087-6.



Reviewed by Kimberly Katz

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Frances Hasso makes abundantly clear what her book, *Resistance, Repression, and Gender Politics in Occupied Palestine and Jordan*, is about in its very first paragraph. She offers readers an ethnographic study of "gender, women's involvement, and sexuality in the ideologies and strategies of a transnational Palestinian political movement," with a particular focus on one Palestinian resistance organization, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) (p. 1). One of the book's putative strengths is its aforementioned claim to focus on this transnational aspect of the Palestinian political movement. However, this transnational component is restricted to comparisons of the DFLP and its affiliated women's groups with splinter groups based in the Occupied Territories and Jordan. Furthermore, the DFLP's central party apparatus in Damascus seems remote from Hasso's vision. Thus one gains little insight into the central authority's inner workings or its approach to women's and gender issues, except when DFLP partisans leave Syria, and end up often in Jordan.

Hasso observes at the outset of her book that studies of Palestine resistance organizations have focused predominantly on military and political issues, and largely neglected the role women have played in these organizations. Furthermore, Hasso notes that such studies generally fail to examine gender and sexuality in the broader sense (including conceptions of masculinity), a failure that argues for the significance of her work and the contribution it makes to the scholarly literature on Palestinian and resistance politics. To rise to this challenge, the author analyzes the organization's documentary evidence to trace its structure and to outline its platforms and actions. To add substance, nuance and texture to the story, Hasso relies on interviews and personal stories, with some of men in the DFLP, but with many more women partisans in this and other organizations. These interviews are clearly the most powerful elements of Hasso's work, and she is to be commended for recording these narratives, presented so articulately, and bespeaking such passion and frustration.

By telling the story of women and women's roles in the DFLP in this book, Hasso brings forth previously unknown aspects of the Palestinian national struggle to achieve independence and end Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Few outside the specialist community are aware of the complexity of Palestinian resistance groups and politics, and even fewer are aware of the strength of women's efforts to participate in the liberation of their homeland and their people. The intellectual capacity of the women partisans in the DFLP and their battles with the male-dominated leadership of the organization for equality and openness will surely surprise the American lay reader for whom the terms "Arab" and "Muslim" are rarely associated with democratic or egalitarian institutions. Hasso weaves together accounts of these women's individual and collective activities and experiences, recounting tales of their grassroots activism in the negotiable political space that the DFLP had opened to women's participation. In the process, she openly challenges prevailing American stereotypes about Palestinians in general and Palestinian women in particular.

Being "of mixed Jordanian and Palestinian heritage," Hasso has more than just intellectual interest in the subject of her study, a fact that she discloses at the outset (pp. xxivff). She shares with the reader her intellectual journey, beginning with a Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committee (PFWAC) internship early in her education and continuing throughout the doctoral research that culminated in this book. The questions Hasso raises stem as much from her work experience with the PFWAC as they do from her academic study. Hasso's book, however, is not a work of anthropology in the participant-observer tradition. Thus there is no need for the author to place herself in it. Nevertheless, once she does by providing the aforementioned personal information, one might expect some kind of follow-up, yet none is forthcoming.

That said, Hasso's presentation remains fluid until the book's final chapter, which is not a formal conclusion, but a ten-page overview of the author's reflections on women and gender issues in the DFLP branches in Lebanon, Syria, and Kuwait. After spending 184 pages carefully presenting this story, through insightful interviews and with historical clarity, as it unfolded in the Palestinian Occupied Territories and Jordan over the course of several decades, Hasso dedicates a mere ten pages to discussing the three separate cases of Lebanon, Syria, and Kuwait during the period from the 1970s through the 1990s. At this point the reader wonders if this final section was a last-minute supplement prompted by the author's possession of additional interview material that she wanted to include in the book. Indeed, such an inclusion could have added a fine comparative aspect if integrated within a true concluding chapter, and perhaps provided a summary of needed future research in this area. As a stand-alone, concluding chapter, however, it leaves the reader wondering if this should not be the introduction to a different study.

On the positive side, it must be noted that in her book Hasso presents a historicized framework within which to examine the DFLP, the roles women played in the organization's development, and the ways in which gender roles informed that development. Thus Hasso presents the reader with both a history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and of the emerging resistance, by highlighting the specificities of the DFLP's history and by focusing on women's participation in the organization. Readers who are unfamiliar with this conflict but have an interest in political resistance movements and/or women and gender studies in other settings will find the historical narrative Hasso provides particularly helpful as they delve into this complex subject. However, the frequency with which acronyms for numerous Palestinian organizations appear is a bit jarring, even for readers familiar with the topic. In addition, the specialist reader will detect serious and consistent

problems with Hasso's transcription of Arabic words into the Latin alphabet (see, e.g., pp. 46; 59; 65, n. 1; 69). The author might have done better simply to translate Arabic words rather than use such a haphazard system.

Frances Hasso ably conveys the complexity of one particular Palestinian resistance organization, the DFLP, and of women's roles in it. This combines with her analysis of gender roles to constitute a compelling account, in spite of the presence of numerous copyediting errors and the aforementioned transcription problems. Hasso's interviews produced frank and honest responses, deepening our understanding of the challenges, rewards, heartbreaks, and disappointments of women active in the Palestinian resistance movement. These responses are the substantive core of Frances Hasso's book. She has produced a powerful story, one that will go a long way toward explicating Palestinians' resistance to Israel's long-standing occupation of their land, and women's participation in that resistance.

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