

Interview with Leila Naffa

2014

TAPE 1

Nicola Pratt: Okay. Can I begin by asking you when and where you were born?

Layla Naffa: I was born in 1944, it was the end of the World War and now when I recall how was the situation, it was a tricky year at that time, but 70 years, I'm 70 now, 70 and past.

N.P: It's okay, and you were born in Amman?

L.N: In Amman, yes.

N.P: And your parents were Jordanian?

L.N: Yes, they are both Jordanian, Jordanian-Jordanian, in the Jordanian context this is, yeah...

N.P: What did your father do?

L.N: Excuse me?

N.P: What did your father do? What sort of work?

L.N: His work is, in England very famous shopkeeper but for clothes, we say when we translate it merchant but he's not not that, he's just a shop keeper.

N.P: And did your mother work?

L.N: No, no.

N.P: And, do you have,, what's your first memory of an important national event or political event?

L.N: When I was very, very young, there used to be many demonstrations in Amman, and it was in the 1950's when Nasser was in Egypt and everybody in Jordan was attracted to his speeches and plans, and I remember that one of my brothers gave a speech of support to Nasser in front of the Egyptian embassy and I was there . So I was involved from an early age in politics. This was around 1956 when there was the aggression against Egypt, the British and the French and you know this is in history very strong, and this is how I was attracted to, shall I say public work or politics in general, political parties, and my life was directed ?? (2:27) from that early period in my life even before finishing high school, very much attached to politics.

N.P: Was that unusual for young women in your background?

L.A: Yes I think it is. At that time it was okay but later now hen Jordan had very severe attacks on politicians or shall we say the opposition, people left and changed to the old traditional way and traditionally women don't mingle with politicians and they don't join in public events, but I remained among the minority who were very much attached to politics and to activism and being in the opposition all the time and being leftist all the time.

N.P: So you were actually a member of an organization, a political organization?

L.A: Yes, I'm member of the communist party since long.

N.P: And did you ever play a role in decision making in t he party?

L.N: Right now I'm a member of the central committee in the party and sort of mobilizing women inside the party.

N.P: When, going back to when you were younger, did you go to university?

L.N: Yes.

N.P: And was there also lots of political activism and activities at the university during that time?

L.N: Yes, at that time it was late 1960's, and Jordan had 2 years or more even of liberties, we were very active in the university, I mean not only in political events but also cultural, also

stage, theater, but it was all for exposing or displaying leftist ideas, this was the mission at that time, but it was very liberal at that time, the Fidayeen, Palestinian Fidayeen (freedom fighters) were everywhere in Amman while I was in the university and we were very active, girls especially those of Palestinian origin, many, many girls were involved in politics so I was not an extraordinary thing, I was among the majority in the mainstream, most of the university students boys and girls were so much involved in politics at that time.

N.P: And the leftists were the strongest?

L.N: At that time, yes, at that time they were stronger, even from Fatah or you know the big Palestinian shall we say sectors? The leftists were stronger at that time but we got weaker and weaker by time, after the attack, great attacks were against the leftists and that's why we became among the minority.

N.P: Can I ask about the war of 1967? Do you have memories of that?

L.N: Yes, I was at university at that time and we felt that it was a blow, the first time in my life I felt that even my mouth is bitter, sometimes in Arabic we say facts are bitter and we came out to understand that our defeat was much, much more than we expected, and all our lives were changed, we started to think of humanitarian things, not of politics only, we started helping the new influx of refugees, to start even camps and to help there, we spent even hours helping, and after that two years of relaxation inside Jordan we started also to mobilize for politics, it was a hard time, hard feelings inside and that's why women were getting active to support the new influx of refugees, and that's how the Arab Women Organization that I work in now was established, the first center was in a new camp called Baqaa camp because in Jordan we do have 2 types of camps, the old camps since 1948 and they are now part of the cities, but the new camps at that time they used to say that they are for the displaced because they moved from one area in the same country when the West Bank was part of Jordan, and they were put in like in remote areas in suburbs of Amman, so Baqaa camp still exists and our center, I mean the AWO center still exists, and we spent like 40 years now serving refugee women, Palestinian refugee women in that camp. It is very hard to recall how sad those days were and how we came to be more realistic, we used to be when we were young very optimistic, it's things are

attainable and women rights will be you know in 10 years' time would be achieved. We became more realistic and we understood how severe the enemies are and we are living in an area where we will never be left alone, leftists will never be allowed to rule, and not only Israel to survive but also they would like to keep control over the petrol money, and now we saw from then how the reaction raised among the Arabs especially the Gulf states are taking a major role and we can see that we do have three big enemies like beasts around us, Israel is one, the leaders of the West states, you know England, France, all this, and the Gulf states, they are like a triangle putting us in the middle and confiscating our movement.

N.P: Was it... did you face any particular challenges in the Arab Women Organization when you started to work because you're a women's organization, because you're helping Palestinian refugee women, did you face any hostility from...

L.N: Our organization from the very start till now never had any problem with the Palestinian-Jordanian issue, we are of Jordanian origin and leaders in the women's movement, but we are accepted by Palestinians because we have chosen to support the Palestinian problem and for having a Palestinian state and for liberating the lands that were taken in 1967. This is not the issue, the issue that we were like blockaded by the government itself, so after the establishment of this organization in 1970 there were the September events and there were like crackdowns on every leftist, on Fidayeen, on all the leftist pavement?? (11:30) and this remained till 1990, around that year, so imagine 20 years of working to mobilize women like you are leading something on the ground, though it was legal, we used to hand in our reports every year, but the real work was not easy, to give an example we started in this celebration to call for celebrating the 8th of March, 8th of March then was not known for everybody, we used to celebrate it in houses and then we used the premises of AWO to celebrate and to invite people, but we never put this in the newspaper or called openly for it, we used just to pass the word that there is a gathering to celebrate the 8th of March, and after 19975 when the UN declared that 8th of March is an international we started aaaah looking that everybody is celebrating the 8th of March and now it is stolen from us, I like it, I mean that everybody in Jordan now celebrates the 8th of March but then when this organization was young it was the

only organization celebrating the 8th of March because it is you know, an international day and we were keen on building relationships, not only in the local arena but also amongst the Arabs and amongst the, shall we say, people who care to show solidarity with the Palestinians and the Arab cause.

N.P: And, are there any other particular difficulties that, 20 years as you said is a long period to be working in this, were there limits or constraints on the work that you could do during that time or did you find strategies to deal with challenges?

L.N: I think the most hard thing or challenge is the fund raising, we were sort of blockaded and at that time nobody speaks about funding projects or the system like now, but we used, you know just imagine that we all, shall we say leading it, selling, shall we say a calendar for one dinar from one shop to another shop to collect money in order to support our center in Baqaa camp. At the time also we had support, different types of support, it's passion, we felt it, when we wanted to, shall we say, print a calendar for, shall we say 1974, 1975, 1973, 1974, 1979, we had a very, very famous painter who donated his paintings, and he said take it, and he even gave us the plate from the print house, use it, and this is how we had to overcome the trouble of fund raising to survive, and many, many times we used to pay, and especially the leaders, I was not then a leader at this, I was working, we used to pay from pockets in order to support tiny little events and all our work for so many years was voluntary and no payment for anybody then, and this changed later on.

N.P: This change came about after 1990 when there was sort of globalization?

L.N: Yes, we felt after 1998, you know Jordan had a very important year, it was 1989, when there was like intifada or revolt in Jordan and it started to change to be more liberal, at that time also they abolished a law against communism, they allowed people to run for the parliament without stopping them, and we had the feeling that everybody is relaxed, they accepted to appear on platforms, to speak, the newspapers started to put our cause from our speeches, especially Emily, my sister was leader of this organization, she was asked to speak in different places, and this was very strange at the very beginning, shall we say till 1994 we had very good time to sit and to think of changing the direction, all our direction in this organization

was for economic empowerment, which means that we provide vocational training for poor women, this is literally, we used to move from one village to another for illiteracy classes, and for the vocational training, but after 1990 we started to speak about being or exposing women to public life and to politics, and started to give out quota, and we started to talk about international conventions to apply them in Jordan, so whole shift, redirection of the organization, and now we end after 20 years of that work to speak of, to speak about monitoring, and now our organization, we went that far to monitor governments, whether they employ the international conventions that they ratify or not, so we moved a very big step forward. In spite of this step was a new type of attack, and now it's still there, that they mobilize people against the NGO's, sometimes we don't call ourselves NGO's, just voluntary, philanthropic organizations. Now when we started speaking about our role as civil society, there is an attack against the whole concept, and they changed their techniques and their mechanisms for attacking. They stopped saying that we don't allow the leftists to work, but if they work in NGO's then these NGO's are in the hands of the imperialists, they speak of imperialism, against imperialism, but they are now agents for imperialists. If we speak nowadays against the nuclear reactor the attack is that we are pro-Israel because Israel is against the nuclear reactor in Jordan, so they would like to put us in a corner that we don't like to be labeled like that, we're not like that, but they would like to tell the simple people, "look, they speak of being anti-corruption, and working for the interests of people, but in fact they are under the table taking money from the West, they like to apply agendas which are strange to our people", and when it comes to religion they would like to expand it to the extent that we are Christians, we are not good women in reputation, and they have so many other ways to attack us, and this is how they lead it up to this minute. They attack NGO's and civil society and they would like to corner us in the ways we're not like that, and this is in order to mobilize against us. Of course they choose also, because I think most of the middle management, the same word I used in a previous interview, most of the people are from a tribal background, and now with the extreme Islamists being for the last 3 years working very freely in Jordan, speaking against women's rights, and consider any person who speaks for women's rights as those are agents for the West, and this is not genuine, we don't need the West, Islam has given

women, our women, everything, and they are asking for liberation and liberation is like being like the West, to be like the West, and this is not our culture, so the attack of the Islamists together with the attack of the tribes, and the tribes depend on the logic of the Islamists, so we are at this minute cornered by such an attack inside our society. It's not an easy thing to fight against, it's very difficult, because they affect through their media, I mean the government and the Islamists through their mosques, they affect ordinary people, people at the grass roots, and this is against what we're working for. We're working to enlighten the people at the grass roots of their rights, to enlighten women about their rights also, and to mobilize them in order to advocate and to change the laws, this is the legal reform that we call for to mingle in politics because they have to change while being in the political decision making places. So, it wasn't an easy thing, not only in the organization itself but as persons, as persons, they tried to, mar is the word?

N.P: To mar, yeah.

L.N: Yeah, to mar your history, your cleanliness as a fighter for liberty, and to accuse persons like person assassination, they were like to target you every day, every day, "you're agents, you are trying to pass hidden agendas" and this is the type and the mechanism they use now, they stopped using that you should stay at home, no you're out of home it's okay if you work, but you have to abide by our rules. If you don't abide by our rules, you are doing something for the enemies, and I told you about the nuclear thing, you know if you go against the nuclear reactor, you're an agent to Israel, and this is the way they... once our organization was attacked because we had a reproductive health clinic, family planning, and we used to provide women with contraceptives, and it was in one in the tabloids that we were serving Israel because we would like the Palestinians to be less, because Wadi Abdoun, the place you saw us is inhabited by Palestinians. So, this kind of attack it's illogical, and for the educated people it doesn't pass, but for the people at the grass roots, you know speaking that we would like to let women stop giving birth, and this is a long, sad story in Jordan. I feel the same these days, these days we're working with Syrian refugees, and we cannot introduce the family planning ideas, because the Islamists tell them that this is haram (prohibited) and we shouldn't speak even about it, and we

go into place where very young women are married, even less than 14, and they refuse to be you know exposed to contraceptive to ?? (25:13) health of the baby and for birth spacing, this is what we call for. And they think that we're doing something against the Syrian people like we used to do something against the Palestinian people, if we speak of the health of the mother, the right of women for good health and ?? (25:31), so it has been a very bad battle against us.

N.P: So how did you deal with that? Both at the personal but also the organizational level?

L.N: At the person level you have to go on and on and stand fast and never retreat. This is a decision a person has to take. You know, not many remained in the fighting arena. And as an organization you have also to find ways and depend on supporters to overcome all the troubles. I can tell you a story that once our organization was dissolved, this is the right of the ministry, why are you dissolving the organization? Because you go outside and you speak on behalf of Jordan, you shouldn't do that. But we went to the supreme court and a very good lawyer, progressive, won the case. So, we regained working, now they cannot dissolve us because there is a supreme court decision, that was in the 1980's. Another attack was not against the organization because it was sort of immune against??(26:56), it was the character assassination of the leaders of the organization. So I think they developed, I mean when I say they I mean the enemies of civil society, the enemies of having freedoms for the people, enemies of having law of association and freedom to start an organization, all these are there in what is called the deep government, I see this term used in the media, we call it differently but now we're learning how it's used because it's understood all over the world that there is inside the country a deep government were people are holding all the strings, and the manipulate and they develop their ways and they try to fight civil society, progressive, leftists, communists, and civil I mean NGO's, women activists. They try to show them as enemies of the people but we're not, we're friends of women, we're friends of the people, we would like them to get their rights and have their future in their hands, decision of their future.

N.P: After September the 11th when the government here was fighting terrorism here in Jordan, did the government then change its attitude towards leftist organizations or progressive organizations like this one?

L.N: For me I kept all the time thinking they should, but they didn't do it. they didn't do it. they should because we're the supporters, they should depend on us if they plan to do any reform, they should depend on strengthening this massive work of the civil society to support against those who have very reactionary I mean archaic ideas and philosophies, but they didn't do it. At the time they speak openly, it's for me, it's a?? (29:50) service against the Islamists, but they support them, they support the Islamists, and even I don't like to speak in such a way but even the king is afraid of them, I said it before, but they are afraid of the Islamists but at the same time they use them, and the war against terror was not applied in a way to uproot all what is called terrorism. In Jordan now we feel that more terrorists are born and mobilized than before, and the government looks at it and they close their eyes and they do nothing, whereas if we go for a demonstration shall we say against Wadi Araba treaty which is between Jordan and... haa they crack down on that, like a real crackdown, and they fight this...

TAPE 2

Layla Naffa: people to military courts for that, whereas they are very lenient because we know that the Islamists are supporting the final objectives, overall objectives.

Nicola Pratt: are there any sectors within the Islamist movement that you've been able to cooperate with? I mean, are there differences between different groups?

L.N: When it comes to the communist party it is different, when it comes to women's issues it's another story. The communist party and the Islamists and the other leftist parties they found a way of working together against Israel and against Wadi Araba, since 1994 when Jordan signed Wadi Araba peace treaty with Israel, there was like a coordinating committee between the politicians. Now it is dying out, when it comes to women's issues it's a different story, they are not ready to accept any call for women's rights. That's why we lead two different things, on the political arena it's different alliances, and when it comes to women's issues Islamists they don't tolerate us and they don't accept not a single thing to speak about women's rights. If we speak

of CIDAW which is the international convention they go and educate their women I mean the organizations that are pro-Islamists that CIDAW is a nasty thing, it is for lesbians, so people will get out of it, when they use the term gender they don't put it in its proper context, they say this is also for bad women, they use the word whores, you know the ugliest word in Arabic for women who fight for women's rights, so there is like a cut, no alliances, no possibility for working together when it comes to women's issues, NGO's, civil society, it's different from the other arenas.

N.P: In the areas where you work like amongst poor women, amongst Palestinian refugee women, is there, do you find that there's some competition to mobilize these women because of the existence of Islamist organizations that are trying to work in the same communities?

L.N: Yes. Yes, we find it very, very shall we say delaying all our work. Let me give you an example: we go to the grass roots and we tell them that you have rights, and the rights are backed by the UN and the international arena, and on the other side they bring to them leaflets and booklets saying that CIDAW is not for... and they distribute them. Now we remain in the field, trying to abolish their own saying. They are very strong, they use the mosque and they are very rich, and they produce booklets. I might explain this by showing you that they have a booklet about CIDAW at the cover they put the picture like this: A mother who is not with a scarf with jeans because they consider that this is the way Westerns, is turning her face to her family, while the poor man is holding a baby and another baby is holding his you know clothes, two are standing so... it is the vice versa of truth, it is not truth, so the man the poor man is taking the responsibility of the children, and the liberated woman is leaving and they put the crack which means divorce. It's either they tell the men that they should divorce women without scarves, or they are telling the ordinary people if you don't put a scarf and if you don't put the Islamic and if you don't abide by your husband's orders you will be like this woman, you will crack the family. And they shed tears all days about family and family values, and all these things, and when we come to speak to women we are trying to distract or demolish the basis for having a good family. Now with the movement, our movement is developing and we're getting into violence against women, and speaking more and more about GBV, speaking more

and more about laws that should forbid hitting women or abusing women, they start saying that in Islam it is allowed but minor hitting and minor, so we cannot go and speak that husband should not hit their wives, because they say you go against Quran and this is a taboo, a taboo in the way, we say we have to have our ways to revise and go again over that, and all the media now because the Islamists use Al-Jazeera and use many of the media in order to pass their philosophies or pass their doctrines or principles, people are affected much by that. That's why when we find a very good speaker on behalf of Arab women like Fardia ?? (7:11) from Egypt, like the women from Morocco and Tunis, we start to think that we are supported by Arab thinkers, by women who are courageous facing these, and we start passing the Youtubes and whatever we find, articles to our women in order to consolidate our front, but in fact I say in the last 4, 5 years we are suffering a lot from a regression, sometimes in the West they call it backlash, but it is such a big backlash in our society, because of the war on terror put all the lights over terror and over Islam, and the Islamists' reaction was very fierce, and the new type of, they would like to have symbols for the movement and they women clothing and all this as symbol of their strength, and now you cannot go and talk to even progressive women why do they put scarf over their heads, they say we don't believe in what they call for, we are with the liberation of women and with the better laws for the family, we don't believe in them, but socially they speak against women so much that they have to put the scarf on, and this is for us a very, very big backlash, now we need like a new revolution amongst women fighters and amongst women to get rid of the scarf, again as if we are repeating the beginning of the 20th century when Huda Shaarawi in Egypt, you know with the revolution they started to take off the scarf, now we should prepare for such a movement. Yes, this is how I see that we should aggregate all our work not for shall we say having seats in parliaments as we do now or economic empowerment by giving jobs to women and increasing women enrolled in the working force as it should be, but we have to prepare for social revolution amongst women, we should. It's going to take time.

N.P: Do you think the Arab Revolutions has helped the possibility of social revolution for women?

L.N: At the very beginning we were very optimistic, but with the developments afterwards we started to see that it is giving the other impact, negative impact, directly after the 25th of January in Egypt there was the 8th of March and the Islamists were, you know, coming from underground into the surface, they started using harassment, sexual harassment on the streets, in order to force women to go back to their homes, and later there are many, many examples of how they wanted to let women go back, it serves their capitalist, you know, this idea that unemployment is caused by women getting into the ?? (11:00) or these, they serve the capitalists and they serve their own backward way of thinking towards women, which is now is given in a very, very severe and tough, not even like in Islam during the Islam first years, women were participating in everything. But anyway, we started to see that since then harassment, sexual harassment, was used in order to stop women participating, how is this affecting the Arab women, it's affecting a lot, what happens in Egypt is very crucial to what happens to the rest of the Arab countries. We saw this and we started revolting but our means are very, very shall we say weak? We're very weak as a movement when it comes to, all the trends, Islamists and the tribals and the reactionary and the pro-west, they are all against us, and the backlash is very strong, new generations are being educated against women's rights, and this is quite disappointing to our movement, but what is now giving us hope again is also what is happening in Egypt. Also after the attack on the Muslim Brothers who were very severe against women and whose example was trying to be like dominating in the Arab World, like the example in Turkey, and you know all the Muslims were helping each other to give this example like in Turkey they allowed the scarf in universities, you know it was like a big trend carrying on, but this stopped on the 30th of June last year, and you can find now that the women in Egypt are the biggest sector who are supporting the people who are against MB, and for me this is meaningful, very much meaningful. They hope by time women will understand that these people they don't advocate real Islam, they are advocating backwardness and they would like us to go back to, shall we say, very bad years in the history of the Arabs, we call it Arab decadence, where it's against renaissance when people like in the middle ages, they would like to pull us back to the middle ages. People are against this, and now the example of Syria, I don't know if you follow the politics in Syria, but people now are against the Islamists and the

extremist Islamists more, because of the examples that are being practiced by the bad oppositions in Syria, because each day they formulate new guidelines or instructions against women, and they put so strange ideas, so funny things, and something that you'll never, ever think of having, the extreme reactionary way of thinking against women, and they force the black dresses and they sometimes ask for strange things, they consider that sitting on a chair is not proper for women, we should sit on the ground, all the time you know, I don't know why, I don't know why, but this creates a reaction, and the reaction now amongst women, amongst grass roots like in Egypt, people whisper to us, they don't speak it openly, they whisper to us, we don't accept this, and they would like their children and their girls to go to school, continue their schooling and to be, you know, employees in the future, get money to their families, the way we are accustomed to, and I think what is happening in Syria has shown the ugly face of the extremists in this region, and it is getting fired back, it's fired back against their doctrines and principles, and it is for our cause, and also what is happening in Egypt now, the re-education, and as I told you before, the media, the Egyptian media is affecting the Arab World as a whole. I talked a lot.

N.P: No, no. did you participate in any of the demonstrations that happened in Jordan in 2011?

L.N: A lot. Yes. In all the calls, you know as a politician and as a woman activist, I went to the streets with all the demonstrations that were calling for reforms, political and legal, in Jordan the movement was not for changing the regime, you understand that, because the Palestinian problem here and Iraq and Syria, you know, all the atmosphere, the agreement amongst the people was that we need reform, not toppling of the king. At the very beginning the king was clever to ?? (17:31)is this English? To barge?? with the strong wind, and there were little liberties we could raise the quota in Parliament, we had the constitutional court, this is new in Jordan, and also the election commission for Parliament, we were happy but they were not good with women's issues. What happened is that we were very active, we went into the streets and we made our lobbying, we selected a troika from women's movements, to try to change article 6 in the constitution, but we failed, we couldn't do it, article 6 doesn't have in the words none-discrimination according to race, religion and language, no sex, like all the

constitutions in the world, we brought constitutions from Muslim countries like Bangladesh, we brought Arab constitutions, we showed them the text, and honestly speaking the people who were formed to change the constitution accepted it, it was called a royal committee or commission, they changed according to our will but all of a sudden when it went to the court, it was taken out, and they replaced it with something also reactionary, they started to speak about the family. You know, whenever you speak about women's rights they appear the tribals and the Islamists, because we feel still in Jordan that there is an alliance for the family, for the future of the family, women should do so and so and they added this in the constitution and usually this is not part of the constitution, but they added this paragraph and they took out the word no discrimination according to sex. So, we felt that the blow was hitting us in the struggle and from that point we feel that we are standing still, and not a single movement for women's... of course everybody is pulling us back, with the backlash, with the impact of the Islamists, with the growing extreme Islamists affecting us, and at the same time now the king and the court come to stop this movement, and we feel helpless, we're trying now to regain our lobbying for changing, you know, points that will annul the impact, the severe negative impact. Of course, for other issues our organization has a priority for giving nationality to children of the mothers who married, because this is part of CIDAW article 9, we supported, by myself I went into 14 out of 19 sit-ins for these women in front of the Parliament. You know we were on the streets all through 2012, but still we do other things like monitoring, I will show you in the shadow report that the group of Nimeh Habashneh is with us and the priority that we monitored is the nationality law and now, also in 2013 we presented another shadow report for the UPR which is for human rights in general, not for women's issues only, for the human rights council, and the number 1 recommendation for all countries to Jordan is the nationality law, and now they started to speak about civil rights for these children, and they don't do it properly, you know, giving it as a right, they try now to make it like, if you request for your child to go to school, for a young man to have a license for driving, you will get it, but it's not given as a right so they are not called anymore civil rights for these children, but they are called services, we allow them to perform services, and this is of course nasty but we have to accept it, it's a

little step forward, at least the hardships that young men face would be less, this is the only thing that we got in the last 3 years. The only, only tiny little step forward.

N.P: Can I ask you how... sorry I forgot the question, I had two questions I wanted to ask. Okay, one question is why is it important for you to continue to be active, given all the challenges and given all the... that you have to work very hard and make small progress, and why not retire and relax? Yes, why is it important to continue?

L.N: Well, mainly because I was attached to politics from young age. I am so much attached to progressive and I'm dedicated, I felt it from my heart that I should support women more and more, and this period of time I feel that we are at the threshold of better times, but we should hold on and give the banner or what is it called? Torch to the new generation because they deserve it, and sometimes I feel that I'm doing it for myself and for my family and for my grandchildren, I have 4 granddaughters, they should live in a better society in this part of the world, so I feel it is personal and I feel it is a continuation of the life I have chosen also.

N.P: Do you see a new generation of women activists?

L.N: Yes, I feel that in Jordan we used to be when we started our movement like progressive women, adhering to universality for human rights, for independence of NGO's, all these principles that we are advocating. I feel that a big number of young women they take it for granted, they are, they don't compromise, they feel that this is natural to have universality, you know, as if it came like that, we fought for it but now they take it... this is a must, and they speak of the independence of civil society and whatever principles we are for, public participation, political participation, economic empowerment, and they take it for granted, and they believe deep inside in them and they work for it, I envy them, you know they take it as if it's something basic for their lives, I like it, I like it a lot, there are plenty of girls doing that. Usually this is the middle class, and this is why I'm sad, I would like this to pass into the grass roots, because all our concentration now as I told you before on carrying on with Equality Network which has like 82 women NGO's and they are in all places in Jordan, in villages, in remote areas and we have connections there, and we would like this way of thinking, believing in the future, believing in women's rights, believing in the equal status of women and men,

universality of human rights and our independence whether in work or whether in having the right within the family to decide your future, we would like this to be for everybody in Jordan, and in spite of all the hardships I still believe that after what happened in Egypt lately, no more Muslim Brothers dominating the media we will have better times in the near future, hopefully.

N.P: Okay, thank you.

L.N: I hope so.

N.P: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

L.N: A whole hour!

N.P: Is there anything I didn't ask you that you think is important?

L.N: You know, I skipped talking about the way we deal with each other like progressive women. My dream is that we work more closely with those who think alike, not only in Jordan but also in the Arab countries, because the solidarity is... we lack a solidarity between leading women NGO's in Jordan up to this moment, we all, we feel that the strong NGO's they work on the same line, very progressive, but we're not building solidarity to move stronger forward, and still I believe that we should find a way to create solidarity activities and work with the Arab co-partners who think alike, and this is I think a future mission for us to make other NGO's believe that we should support each other, what we don't do until now in Jordan.

N.P: Is there a reason for that? Is there a particular reason why?

L.N: Maybe because of the attacks, everybody would like to be in his castle and to protect himself in the castle, but this doesn't serve the big cause, maybe with little relaxation no attack from the government maybe we will be convinced to work together more, but in this solidarity sense, we should not dissolve ourselves, we cooperate, we coordinate, we work together, joined actions, set our priorities, even we do set our common priorities, but we don't move it together to the dialogue, we don't lobby together, we should move into joined lobbying, at a local level and at a national level, we should try to make it a movement, but it is not. Yeah, this

is sort of a dream or shall we say things to be done in future, this will give us, you know in the old age we need also big things to make us remain in the fighting

N.P: Thank you very much. Thank you.