

Interview with Tereza Al Rayan

2014

TAPE 1

Tereza Al Rayan: I am Tereza Al-Rayan from the city of Madaba, do you know it?

Nicola: Yes.

TR: It's 35 kilometers to the southeast of Amman... I was born in 2 October 1954... I completed my high school studies in Madaba and then went to the University of Jordan in 1971 or 1972, and there's a paradox in that... Let me say that when the 1967 war broke out, I was in the eighth grade. I remember that very well because we reacted to what was called the 5 June war. I lived at the time in a neighborhood that included political activities since the fifties whether that was with the Arab Nationalist Movement, the Communist Party, or even the Syrian Nationalist Party which was an integral part embraced by the regime in Jordan. Do you understand or shall I repeat?

N: Yes.

TR: Do you understand?

N: Yes, I'm fine.

TR: There was a background or some kind of political influence, because most of the area's young men had been arrested since 1957 and the following years. **[inaudible:0.01.34.1]** 1967, I don't exactly remember what month, but they were released and the people celebrated them. We were children running around in the streets, and we saw the people carry them on their shoulders in appreciation. We started then to interact and become influenced. In addition, our house was always open to people, so they gathered in the evening before 1967. I don't want to trouble you with the details but I'm trying to explain the influencing background. They gathered at our house and discussed their issues. I'd like to point out the nature of our public awareness; we had no knowledge or information about Israel. The information about their power and the weakness of Arabs were revealed by the six-day war. The people were expecting victory and having the illusion of having dinner in Haifa and Yafa as you know. I believe that the National liberation movement which emerged in 1948 rose in the fifties especially in 1956 according to my personal opinion, but it deteriorated during the war of Algeria's independence, and the union between Syria and Egypt. It was in a state of decline resulting from an internal crisis in democracy and economic and social development, there was a crisis at the cultural level and all levels. So the defeat in 1967 wasn't for no reason, it was a result of a crisis around the Arab World, inside the Arab National liberation movement, and in the accumulation of regressive thinking under the leadership of Saudi Arabia and the conservative forces. The Americans had a role for sure during that stage, and

fought everything progressive and patriotic in the Arab World in the name of fighting Communism.

The war of 1967 was a sign of the collapse of the Arab national liberation movement, and the reaction was that of the Palestinian resistance despite all the mistakes that were made, the interference of the Arab oil money, and ruining this revolution or its leadership internally. Oslo was a natural result of this ruin that started since the flush of oil in the Arab World. During that period in 1967... people started to realize that Israel is not a joke, and the struggle against Israel is a struggle against backwardness, and for development and democracy in the region. It's a struggle against the American Imperialism. It's not about fighting with an Arab army. Even the thought of carrying out an armed people's revolution and the consequences of 1970 in Jordan is a sign **[inaudible:0.05.07.7]** During that period when the Palestinian resistance operated from Jordan, there was freedom in the country, and the government's suppression and intelligence system retreated to some extent in order to organize itself. The other party was running loose to form something like a duality of authority in the country. Some political forces started to work actively, because most of the national movements and parties joined the armed Palestinian commando which was the biggest mistake in the history of Jordan. The National Movement and political parties should've stayed away from armed resistance. Armed combat should have stayed within the Jordan Valley in military bases far away from cities with the activation of the political movement as a supporting partner. The political movements also have duties at the level of Jordanian democracy along with the duty of resisting Israel. So, armed resistance isn't the only way to defend the rights of Palestinians and implement the UN resolutions such as the right of return and the two state solution.

During those times, I joined the Jordanian student movement or the student union which was organized by the Communist party in Jordan. I was publicly elected in Madaba as a secretary for the union in Madaba. I also joined the Jordanian Communist Party in my early years. I was certainly influenced by my neighborhood as I told you, but I was particularly influenced by a woman who was arrested. Only three women from Madaba were arrested in 1957, but her name was Layla Toul and she was a member of the Communist Party and was imprisoned for three years then released. This was a strange phenomenon in a city like Madaba which is still conservative and whose tribes don't accept the idea of a woman being arrested for political reasons, so it was really hard on her family, and all her brothers were **[inaudible:0.07.39.7]** ... She had a deep influence over me, she always gave me the party's newspaper and she had a deep impact on my political orientation, so she asked me to join the party and I was elected. However, I remained a member of the party after 1970; I finished my high school studies and wanted to study medicine in Moscow. I loved that field and I still love it. But in 1971, which was my final year in school; the Communist Party held a conference and led to division. After that, there was a Communist Party and a different party including Emily and Leyla if you know them, and they called it "The Leninist Cadre". They separated themselves because of many reasons, and I believe most of which are based on personal interests rather than intellectual or theoretical disagreements as we realized. During that time, the party informed me that... I scored a high average that entitled me to a scholarship

from the ministry of education at the faculty of arts at the time. I didn't want to study science and preferred to specialize in English literature. They cancelled my scholarship to Moscow because the party had zero credit at the University of Jordan. I'm currently documenting that the entire student sector joined the "Cadre"; the other part of the party. There was nobody left, and I scored high grades. I don't know if all these details are unimportant to you.

N: They're important, definitely.

TR: I want you to tell me, because sometimes I get carried away.

N: No, please carry on.

TR: Okay, stop me when you want to move on to the next subject. Anyway, I went to university while there was a need to establish a powerful student organization. What was strange is that the student movement was very active at the time, but the national movement was destroyed after the June incidents. There were technically no parties, no forces, and no individuals. The political movement at the national level was completely withdrawn and absent, while the student movement was exceptionally rising. It was a paradox that's worth studying in my opinion. It's normal for the students and the intellectual people to be more enthusiastic than the public due to their age and their contact with culture and so on. The public usually rise in other circumstances.

I was a university student at that time, and we built a strong organization without conflicts. Those who came later and supported the revolution were always either arrested or weak, they had no points of reference or organizations. They went to Beirut after Jerash and that was it for them. This situation created a conflict between the two parties first by establishing associations in every faculty. As I said, I was accepted into the faculty of arts, but not the department of English. I was accepted into the department of Arabic, but I preferred to study economics at my own expense in the business department. I studied economics and statistics. I was elected president in the first student organization in the economics department, then I became the faculty's secretary, and then we started preparing 50 students from all faculties to establish a student union. Abd Al-Salam Al-Majali was the president at the time, and he had some ideas to reform and develop the university. He changed the system from annual into a credit hour system. He also increased the fees, and that was a strong blow for the students who came from poor environments. This caused a wave of protests and sit-ins that we organized.

A group of students were suspended for a semester or two and received warnings. I can mention some of them like Imad Al-Qsous, Zuhair Al-Noubani, this great actor was our colleague at the student movement which was very important, and he discovered his talent on the university's stage, so he was **[inaudible:0.12.33.0]** There was a girl names Afnan, I mean Khitam Hattab, as well as Fayha Abdul Hadi, you know them for sure, the whole group was there. Some of the students received warnings, and the following year witnessed a revolution, so some students were expelled, and I was expelled the year after. I stayed at home for a while then went to complete my studies in Baghdad. I faced another shock in Baghdad because we read about the progressive Iraq **[inaudible:0.13.17.9]** but when I went there, I discovered

the huge amount of Fascism out in the open although the Iraqis were in good circumstances at the time and they didn't face economic difficulties. I was shocked by the brutality of that regime and its interference to recruit individuals even at the institutions that weren't supposed to do so. I started comparing it to Jordan where there is intelligence and a university, and when the intelligence needed you, they summoned you to its offices. They didn't attack or penalize people inside the university. So I had to make the comparison. It was very bad there and I'm talking about the Arab student movement because I had nothing to do with the Iraqi movement. This movement had a national Communist front oppressed by the other Kurdish parties. I'm talking about the Arabs and the democratic forces that didn't belong to or register in Al-Baath party; you know how it was there. These forces were doomed. I had a good relationship at the time with the Arab democratic forces, and I got to know some from Egypt, Morocco, Tunis, Algeria, Yemen, and those who came from abroad. It was an opportunity for me to develop my relations, and I was at least able to attend a highly important conference which was the conference against racism. It was held in 1975 in Baghdad and Miriam Makeba came to sing in it. Miriam is a very famous singer from Mozambique, she was against racial discrimination, and lived in Cuba until it was liberated. This environment was very important to me, and it gave me a chance to read and find more books and references than I could find here. Some teachers at the faculty were economic experts who could be helpful. I got to know leaders at the Iraqi women's league which didn't belong to Al-Baath party but to the league of Communists and their friends and Iraqi democratic women in general. I was introduced to Zaki Khairi's wife, Suad Khairi who was a well-known women... she was beautiful and used to sing in Russian. So I became familiar with the history of Iraqi women at least during that period of time.

After that, I returned to Jordan where I taught economics at professional schools, and then I joined the Jordanian women's union and established its branch in Madaba in 1978. Before that, we used to come to Amman and I was a member here because the organizational structure wasn't right. The Amman branch was the leader of the other branches, and it lacked the element of proper organizational unity among the union's leaders in order to lead it successfully. This was corrected in 1992 and I remained with the union until it was disbanded and faced trouble. Then it was reestablished in 1989 or 1990 and we reopened the Madaba branch. The death of Abdul Nasser at that time and the accession of Sadat, along with the Camp David agreement had a very negative impact at many levels. First of all, it excluded Egypt from the conflict in the Arab region although it's the central state despite all its problems. Second, it paved the way for the possibility of individually dealing with Israel regarding solutions and negotiations. Third, it made room for Jihadists in Egypt which was the most dangerous thing in the history of the Arab region. Sadat made use of Jihadist groups and released them from prison to face what he called, what are they called? Pressure groups? I mean what was left of the previous regime, in addition to the entire Left wing and the possibility of its establishment. So he employed the Islamists and Jihadists, and gave them training camps and so on. This was the point of growth in the Arab region as the Jihadists played a vital role in Egypt in the spread of this violent form of political Islam to the Arab countries.

As a woman, before being in any political position, I consider these forces to be obstacles that not just impede but totally destroy the progressive and developmental movement of equality and eliminating discrimination against women. There is no double in that at least in my opinion. We can say that the eighties witnessed the beginning of dealing formally with the idea of compromise through the Fes agreement... until we reached the Iraqi- Iranian war which was a trap for Arab backwardness by the Americans. The war between Iraq and Iran destroyed the power of Iraq, and the Islamic revolution was still fresh in Iran... They employed the Arab money, military, and efforts to ultimately serve American goals in the region. This was a really bad sign for the Arab region, because the new Iran was supposed to be different from Iran under the Shah's reign which was the second strategic ally for the Americans in the region and against the region after Israel. But when there was a transition and the Palestinian flag was flown over the closed Israeli embassy, it wasn't reasonable or justified to wage a war for that reason no matter how hard the regressive voices tried to justify it even here in Jordan. It was merely a destructive war for both parties in which numerous Iraqi victims were killed, and Arab money was wasted on arms and such things. That money should've been spent on development and their power should've been preserved. Therefore, I believe that was a bad stage that resulted in division and deterioration even at the level of political movements in the Arab community... The Iraqi regime was adventurous in its wars, as it entered into a war with Kuwait right after the war with Iran. Maybe it was baited into it and maybe it had aspirations. The regime had certainly revealed the fact that it was a Fascist dictatorship which didn't consult any one and didn't even have a party. He claimed to have a party, but the party was a group of his family members and inner circle. This was an excuse for the American army to occupy the area with half a million soldiers, and wage a war to destroy and paralyze the power of Iraq, then place it under economic sanctions and deprive it from what's left of its power through the inspectors and so on. For a long time, there was attrition of the regime that led to its collapse by the time of the 2003 war, and that made it an easy target for the Americans.

Another important event in the region was in 2001, as Bush won the elections before that and brought the neoconservatives with him. These conservatives were strange; they were neoconservatives in politics and Liberalists when it came to the economy. They spread Globalization and Americanization all over the world. There was an unusual contradiction, and we had been used to the deep rooted Western Liberalism in its many forms, that Liberalism covered politics and economics together. But the neoconservatives brought about their aggressive mentality which overstepped the authorities, exploited the circumstances, and maybe cheated in the elections, I can't confirm that, but it was said in the battle between Bush and Al Gore that this group came to dominate politics. They untruthfully claimed to be democratic, but they economically imposed "liberal" policies through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and I'm reserved toward the word "liberal" in the sense of liberating the economy from the interference and role of the government, and opening the doors to importing goods, capital, and technology. As for the political and military part, they were extreme and [inaudible:0.24.18.8] in their relationship with other states. America allowed itself again to bring an occupation back to the region. How long had Iraq been independent from direct armies that

could occupy such a large country with all its riches, oil, location, and capabilities? They occupied it without the consent of the United Nations. Remember that the Security Council didn't give its permission to the Americans, and more than 10 million people in Europe [inaudible:0.24.48.4] the protests in Europe were against the war in Iraq and we remember that very well... But they still occupied Iraq and you saw what they did. They unleashed the true terrorist in Iraq that's making us suffer now in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and even in Egypt. All the terrorism that the region is suffering from, and Bush's pre-emptive war against terrorism created and enhanced terrorism, and now the region is suffering from what the Americans created. I hold them responsible for what's going on in the region, as well as the underdevelopment in the status of women, although they claim to support women. They know [inaudible:0.25.46.6] their stand regarding women and their issues in addition to the matters of equality and development. I think I have covered the subject generally, but if you have any questions, because I didn't know what details do you want exactly. Do you have any questions?

N: Yes, May I ask you?

TR: Yes, you may. I'll leave the floor to you because I want to smoke.

N: Go ahead... I'd like to confirm this, when did you start participating in public service?

TR: As I said, I've worked in public service since 1969. I was a member of the party when I was still in tenth grade. That was the first time they included a member who wasn't even 18 years old.

N: Okay, How did you start?

TR: I said there was a general influence, and I used to read as a young girl. Our neighborhood included many Leftists and people who were arrested, even my cousins. My mother was one of those who stamped their fingerprint on the memorandum because she was illiterate, but she demanded to be equal to men in the memorandum of 1955 which the Jordanian women submitted to the Parliament saying "We, whose fingerprints are below", because they were illiterate and had to sign with a stamp as you know. All of that influenced me; in addition of the coincidence that brought me closer to our neighbor and close friend, she had a role in guiding me toward joining a party. And when I did, I became more active. After a while [inaudible:0.27.31.0] because it makes us more open-minded. Sometimes, strict work at a party creates a form of veiled intolerance, but it later enables us to open our minds to the world and see it with a perspective wider than the view of a small individual group. I was young when I entered into the political field, and I'm still interested in it. I also joined the available Feminist activities early. Maybe this needs special circumstances and meeting certain people, or just a quality in your personality, it needs a certain quality and certain interests, along with a supportive or encouraging environment, or maybe a coincidence sometimes, because the people's thinking and directions have changed...

N: Didn't your father and mother worry about you?

TR: Of course, my family was worried, but my mother died when I was younger before I joined this field. She had cancer at a young age and passed away at the age of 52 or 51. My father was open-minded, he wasn't controlling of his children, and I don't remember him ever beating up one of us. He never used violence or even verbal abuse. He was a loving affectionate father with an open mind. Maybe my brothers and elder sisters worried more than him because I'm the youngest member of the family. Of course they were concerned and tried to oppose me, but later on, they were influenced and started to support me. They were forced to stand by my side, and I definitely faced some problems; I was expelled from the university and so on. They blamed me at first, but then tried to find solutions for me by sending me to study abroad, and it was important to them that I complete my studies. This is what usually happens, don't you think?

N: Did you continue...

TR: I studied economy in Baghdad.

N: I mean in politics.

TR: I returned now to the party. When they re-registered the political parties, they needed 500. I told them I couldn't be active because I had responsibilities. I re-registered in the party to keep it from being struck out according to the silly law of parties they have at the government. They asked me to do that and I said yes, so I applied for a non-conviction certificate and allowed them to send my name to the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the 500 names. You know the terms of the new law of parties require 500 members at the level of the kingdom and 50 members according to every governorate. These are the law's requirements in order for a party to be registered...

I wanted to postpone our appointment but it was late so I decided to go through with it for your sake.

N: Is there...

TAPE 2

Nicola: conflict between political activities and working for the rights of women?

Tereza Al Rayan: Feminist activities? Let's say it's not a conflict, I think that Feminist activities has affected the attitude of political parties toward women. The Feminist issue has taken a back seat in the parties' programs... with the elections and the strength of the Feminist movement, it forced the parties to give women a front position. For example, if you take a look at the candidates' posters during the parliamentary elections, you'll find that those who are very conservative and belong to tribes raise the subject of women even if they weren't truthful. They support causes related to women, but what does this mean? It means that the women's

movement has imposed its vision, and proved itself even with the most extreme and regressive parties and individuals as well, in addition to the Leftist parties in which there is discrimination between women and men. The more the Feminist movement is strong and active, the more it will enhance its status, and that's why women should pay attention and build a deep relation with politics in order to form the critical mass that can affect change, while keeping their independence at the same time to protect themselves from being pushed to the back by these forces and parties. The stronger the Feminist movement, the more it is present at parties and not the other way around. The strength of the movement itself is manifested in its ability to force those who don't care about it to include it in their programs and plans. Whether they're convinced or not is a separate subject, but it's important for them to be present. I believe that the Jordanian Feminist movement has gone through important stages, in my opinion that it. The first stage was in the early fifties and was connected to public and political activities. Before that during the forties, I think it was an attempt to enhance and urbanize the matters related to education and so forth, and this is normal in Jordan. So it wasn't a political movement in so much as it was a reforming civilized one. It included the education of women and work concerning the roles of women rather than breaking the stereotypes about them. In the fifties, the movement became connected to politics, but why? Because the region had a national, progressive, and patriotic wave. There was an uplifting and liberal movement as I said earlier. But the feminist movement in Jordan participated in this rise [inaudible:0.03.29.0] however, it leaned toward the Feminist part to some extent. Sorry, I mean the political part more than the Feminist one. There are important events, for example, in 1955, the predecessor of our union today which is the Arab women union or the Arab women's society demanded equality between men and women in elections through an election law that allowed women to vote and run for elections, and not just educated woman. When the law was passed, it included only educated women and excluded illiterate women, so the women submitted a memorandum carrying their finger stamps rather than their signatures. They demanded that they enjoy the right to vote and run for elections just like illiterate men. This movement was more of a political one in the fifties. And when the Suleiman Al-Nabulsi's government was overthrown in 1957, the women's union was disbanded as well, and maybe my colleagues told you about that. After that, Jordan went through a period of political barrenness in its activities and even its thinking. Therefore, the Feminist movement also deteriorated and became barren. But it returned in the early sixties when the women started to gather until 1967 and the following years which are a stage connected to the Palestinian issue so it was a political one. The year of 1975, the international women's year, was an identifying mark for the Feminist movement since it was legally recognized and re-established in Jordan. It adopted Feminist causes like the amendment of laws. Since I'm at a documentation center, I can tell you about a document that was submitted to the prime ministry by the late founder of our union, lawyer Emily Bsharat, in 1976. It was a very bold memorandum that demanded the amendment of several laws. The main amendments that Emily Bsharat demanded as president of the union were the personal status law and increasing the marriage age to 18, the issue of wardship and guardianship over women, and ending the issue of polygamy. She was braver than we are now, and demanded changing the law of inheritance to a law that didn't

follow churches or religious courts. She demanded a civil law for inheritance and marriage, which is a paradigm shift in the causes of the Feminist movement. It was no longer a movement of reform like it used to be in the forties, or a national political movement with some Feminist issues like it was in the fifties. Starting in 1975, we began to see new issues on the Feminist agenda in Jordan. This is related to the United Nations fostering the conferences, to the change that opened us to the world, and to the Feminist movement being influenced by other movements around the world and the indirect colonialism in Africa and Asia. This includes the struggle against discrimination, the movement of civil rights, the student movement in the late sixties in Europe, and the movements against the Vietnam War. All these things made the women aware of their issues which had been discussed for a long time in the West. I think our region began to be open about these subjects after 1975 which was a major event.

During the eighties, there was a dispute with the Islamists regarding the idea of bringing Islam and Feminism into harmony and achieving equality. In the nineties, the Jordanian Feminist movement witnessed a completely different stage which adopted new issues such as violence against women and the international agreements and abiding by them. I believe those were new subjects to appear on the Jordanian Feminist movement's agenda... on the other hand, we saw something called [inaudible:0.08.56.6] or the issues of funding... it had two parts. The movement became obsessed with projects all around the world including us, and I'm not talking about the union but about Feminism in Jordan. It was an obsession with projects and their funding, but these projects helped women from remote areas join the Feminist activities. Without those programs and projects, they wouldn't be able to attract that number of women [inaudible:0.09.36.3] which also needs funding. So that was an important stage in my opinion and it continued to undertake the causes of women...

N: Do you think you have paid a price at the personal level?

TR: Of course, I've lost a lot in my life. It wasn't easy to be pursued, and I couldn't get a passport for a while. I was expelled from my university and delayed for two years, and I wasn't comfortable in Baghdad because I was pursued by Al-Baath party since I didn't belong to it. At the social level, there was phase of fear and terror in Jordan, and people felt concerned if I went to visit them and attract suspicions to their house or cause someone to be questioned by the intelligence about their relationship with me. Of course I felt all that and it deeply hurt me because those were the people I defended and sacrificed for without gaining a dime at the end. When I felt that they were worried about their children because of me, and they were my same age and my friends, but their parents weren't comfortable about my presence, and that was very difficult for sure. It was a price I paid when they tried to isolate me or drive me away. It wasn't easy to endure that and hold on to my faith and principles. Even when it came to marriage, it was difficult for people in our community to think about getting engaged to a girl like me, so it was a high price to pay. It wasn't an easy life at all, even financially and professionally; those who worked in secret didn't get promoted no matter how qualified they were, and the other people got all the promotions and became directors as they were thought to be supporting the government... that was the price.

N: How did you deal with those circumstances?

TR: With those circumstances? I will be honest, I sometimes got angry and retreated a little, but then I refused to let them win. What they wanted is to isolate me, but I gradually started to understand people's fear as parents, and I tried to build relationships that consider these things. But this phenomenon stopped since 1990 after the protests in 1989, and the horizon of democratic change in Jordan appeared to some extent, along with the relative freedom of political work. This reduced the fear a little bit, and we've been at ease for 17 years since 1990. We were able to reconstruct our relationships and move on...

N: Are you going to continue?

TR: Yes, I will continue till my last day. I don't have many years left, so why would I back down? I don't have big financial goals, and I'm used to this life because we're from the middle class, we lead a simple life, and our needs are limited. I don't have a house but I live in my parents' house while they're in America. My husband is dead and I don't have children. He passed away about two years ago, and I live there alone now... I work and drive a 1995 car, and it's okay. I can live well, I'm content, and I don't have that ambition. I ran for the parliamentary elections in 2010, but I didn't succeed because I don't think this is a sound Parliament, I believe it's all fabricated. It doesn't reveal the people's true movements or the power of the candidates. The results contradicted the public opinion which thought I was going to win, and people weren't lying but the elections were false. Maybe they exaggerated a little but there's fabrication for sure. There is flagrant interference in the elections, their results, and everything at the Parliament. The intelligence interferes in everything in the country. [...]

N: Is there anything else you'd like to say? Is there anything I didn't ask about?

TR: I don't know, you let me talk freely, why? That's my question, why did you let me say whatever I wanted?

N: It was all useful.

TR: Was it all useful?

N: To help me understand.

TR: Okay. The purpose of discussing the region this way is to say that it infuses political stands and thinking. These major events that took place in region have certainly affected those who deal with politics and the general awareness of Arabs. As for the revolutions, maybe I didn't discuss them thoroughly, but I think the region is suffering a crisis at the democratic level because of these regimes that has gotten old from all aspects. Change was bound to happen... I'm not questioning the people's movement and they have every right to move, but I think that at some point, somebody interfered to cause the failure of this movement that set out to the streets. Through military organizations and civil wars like the one in Syria, and plans for division like the ones in Libya, such movements were ruined and transferred into a different direction that would lead to transitional chaos in the region for a long

time until the United States and other forces could organize its efforts at the strategic global level. That's my analysis.

The direct results of this Arab uprising were unfortunately the encouragement of Islamist forces. I'm not talking about Muslim people but about the Jihadists or shall we call them terrorists? Let's call them Jihadists. They aren't just local but they also include Al-Qaeda and other international groups... the democratic issues were delayed, and I think today's cause isn't the cause of democracy but that of the people's personal safety. They want to be safe and receive food where they're surrounded by gunmen like what's happening in Syria and now in Libya, and even Egypt where the situation is disturbing and may move in dangerous directions, I don't know how. So many important issues were delayed and the people's safety and lives were endangered, so this replaced even the issues of freedom and bread, not to mention the issues of women. You saw the Tahrir square in Egypt and the cases of sexual harassment that preceded the movement of 30 June, or was it May? You saw the extent and types of harassment and stripping the women and so on. So there are critical indicators concerning the issues of women in the region resulting from the activation of revolutions in different directions that are leading us to chaos, violence, and civil wars. This also includes the democratic issues which they claimed to defend and support. They occupied Iraq to establish a democracy and a model for the world, and the result was the model of Al-Qaeda and Daesh which practice killing with swords, beheading and torturing people. These are the models that we saw. We didn't see a democratic model in the region. So I think that this is detaining the issues of democracy, bread, development, and liberties, and this is natural when one feels unsafe and at risk of losing their life. Safety is one of the basic needs according the Maslow hierarchy of needs, isn't that what it says? One of the basic physical needs is physical safety. I think that we are at a crossroads, and the situation in the region may develop. We as nations, individuals, communities, and states can do one of two things after the Arab spring and all the events we witnessed in the region's history; we can either rise as a nation through three major issues: National liberation and independence (Sovereignty), the issue of social and economic development and improving the people's conditions with and for the sake of the people, and the issues of democracy and freedom. These three aspects are necessary. The other option is for us to perish and cease to exist. There is no third option and we will have no more stages. We're on the brink of a disaster and at a crossroads. We can either choose nations, peoples, and communities with a strategic vision of freedom, independence, development, and democracy, or cease to exist as a nation, and there are many nations that perished although they were larger and more important than us. There are such stories in history, but we want to think positively and believe that we're a united nation that won't perish. This is the conclusion I wanted to say.

N: May I ask you a last question? How do you perceive the young new generation?

TR: Regarding the young generation's interest in politics, we had a misconception that this generation doesn't care. We thought so because they have tools and mediums different from ours and we're trying to keep up with them. Some of us try to learn to use the internet, and I use it because I used to be a computer teacher. There is a difference, no doubt, between the two generations. We thought that the young generation is indifferent and just goes to cafes to smoke hookah, listens to

songs and goes to parties. But that isn't true. What's significant about the public Arab movements is that the young are the ones who rose and called out to the others to go to public squares. They invited other generation to participate, and used social media with skill and innovation, and so, I consider this generation to be... the leader of change. They need [inaudible:0.23.16.7] organize themselves, and create strong leaderships capable of setting a vision for the future and using all the available tools to influence others. I'm in favor of that, and I think that the dialectical conflict between generations has been solved. Technology is supposed to bring people closer rather than driving them apart. This gap in vision and thinking will be reduced through the role of new technologies [inaudible:0.24.04.8] You're forced to keep up because it's widespread. When everyone started to use electricity, some people were against it but they had to keep up, and when they experienced its benefits, they couldn't do without it anymore. I think this is a similar case. This generation is using technologies that are spreading everywhere, and we're trying to learn from their inspiration spirits. This state will prevail, and we'll come closer to them instead of moving away. [...]

N: Have you worked in this job...

TR: I left my position as a teacher. I was a volunteer all my life at the Women's union from 1978 until 2007, and in 2007, I headed the Emily Bsharat documentation and research center. We used to work at a different center and then we built this new one and moved here last year. It's closer and better... that's it. This is my new job, and I have some attempts at writing... I used to write a weekly column at party newspapers but I don't do that anymore. I wrote for Al-Ahali newspaper for about three years, and I published a few articles in daily newspapers. I wasn't an employee, I just wrote articles every now and then. These were just attempts. I published three studies in science magazines in 1990, and they tackled the collapse of the Communist attempt in the world. I wrote about the technology and communication revolution and its effect on the economics of third world countries in the Tareeq magazine which is an important intellectual magazine in Lebanon... What was the third topic I wrote about? It was something about Trotskyism and its future horizons, so it was an intellectual subject. I wrote on three topics but I think the important ones were those about technology, the end of the cold war and collapse of the Berlin wall, and the technological revolution and its impact on the economics of the third world, in addition to Trotskyism and its horizons as an intellectual subject in a human context. It was published in issues number 90, 91, and 92 of Al-Tareeq magazine... Maybe in another Lebanese magazine called "Dunia" but it's no longer published. These were serious magazines, but Al-Tareeq magazine is being published again...

N: That's good. [...]