**Interview with Adma Zuriekat**

**2014**

**TAPE 1**

**Nicola Pratt:** First of all, may I ask you when and where you were born?

**Adma Zuriekat:** I was born in this town, in Al-Rabbah in Al-Karak in August of 1967. On August 5th 1967.

**NP:** And you stayed here, in Al-Karak, for all of your childhood?

**AZ:** My whole childhood was in Al-Karak. In this area. In this small town, Al-Rabbah. Yes.

**NP:** What about your parents?

**AZ:** My parents are in this town as well. This town has... We are from the Zuriekat family, which is an old family, an old tribe in this area, Al-Rabbah. They are farmers. The area has a mix of families: Zuriekat and Al-Majali. There are also Palestinians who immigrated to the area. Those are the main components of the mix. There are also other families that came from other villages to this town. As you can see, it is a very nice valley area. The residents were farmers growing wheat and the likes. I am part of this society. Of course it is a very peaceful society. The relationship between the people here, the Muslims and the Christians are very good. There is no discrimination among people regarding who they are or where they come from. This was very important in small societies like this one. I lived here in peace with people. There are no bad struggles between the people like what is happening now. I lived in a society that had a sense of belonging to the country and loves it. Like I said, the relationships between the people are good. The mixture of Palestinians and Jordanians and what not was not something we were aware of. In my family, my mother is Palestinian, from the territories lost in 1967 but her family immigrated in 1948, while my father is a Jordanian from this area. My childhood was very normal, similar to other people in this rural society. I graduated from high school and went to the University of Jordan in Amman where I studied mathematics. I was supposed to study something else. I wanted to study computer sciences, which was first taught in 1980. I finished in 1984-1985. Computers were new. Unfortunately we still did not know how to use it. The people from the villages in college are simple so I could not study that. I graduated from college. It took me a while. I did not graduate on time. I faced some political problems in college. I joined parties and worked with students and helped establish the student union. There was no student union. There were student associations. That is where my political life began, at college. That's all. I graduated from college and returned to this area immediately and I worked in the towns nearby. I did not work anywhere else. I then got married and I have a daughter. I continue to work in the public sector.

**NP:** When you went to Amman for college, how was Amman at that time?

**AZ:** We are talking about 1984-1985. For me, as a country girl, college was a very open society. There were a lot of people. I met people from different nationalities. There were Arabs, Chinese, and foreigners. It was an open society to us as villagers. Our society is very closed. First, I would like to tell you about the history of my family. I come from a family where the mother works at home and the father worked in the public sector but he also had his own business on the side. My father worked in politics. My father was a politician. Society as a whole around me was politicized. The Al-Rabbah society is politically aware and everyone was involved in political life. The Palestinian revolution influenced them. Therefore, I grew up in a family that was concerned with public affairs and national issues in general. They bore the national concern. When I went to college... before the University of Jordan, I had dreamed about studying in the Soviet Union. Of course, that did not work out due to the family's situation and financial matters. I had a government scholarship at the University of Jordan. I was an accomplished student so I went to college on a government scholarship. I found college society to be nice. I was a girl who wanted to know everything and everyone. I wanted to study at the same time. When I first entered college, I was involved in the student union elections. I had a personal initiative with a group of fellow freshmen in order to participate in the elections. The Islamist trend was in control to a large degree at that time and the doors were open to them. We were not aware of what was happening yet. We were working haphazardly. I remember running in the elections and getting 27 votes. The Islamists got much more than us and made fun of us. This was my first personal experience in politics. I had no ties to organized work in the parties. As a young student, I had read about the revolution in the Soviet Union and about communism and all of that. Afterwards... this was my first experience then the young men who were in the college a while worked in politics would approach us. They would approach the freshmen who were working on their own. They would come and introduce themselves to us. My relationship with those in politics began through these people. For a long time I moved between the different ideological trends establishing relationships with people, searching and learning, and studying my surroundings. I would read people. I did not have organized work for a long time. As you know, at the time there were some bad martial laws. I was summoned by the Intelligence Directorate immediately after my freshman year. This was my first security experience with the Intelligence Directorate. I was 17 or 18 years old. They asked me about some of the guys in college, who I did not know very well because we had met recently. They thought that I had a deep relationship with them. You know how people are. This was my first experience. Immediately after this meeting I lost my scholarship. This was my first security experience and I suffered a state of shock. This is my country and I am not doing anything wrong, it's not like I was causing the country a huge problem. It was my right to work with student associations, to think and to befriend whomever I wanted and to get to know people. This is when I started to think that there was a serious problem in the country. This is where my political experience began. We worked... most of our work, of course, was in relation to the Palestinian cause. The Intifadah (Uprising) had begun in 1986 and drew students in a lot. Afterwards there were the Al-Yarmouk incidents; I believe you have heard of them. The Al-Yarmouk incidents... the incidents in Al-Yarmouk were related to college students who had some student demands and concerns. They were demanding a student union and the likes. The security forces stormed them and killed several of them. Two or three, if memory serves. This resulted in a huge problem. They stormed the dorms and it was the first time security forces entered after 1970, when there was another problem. We were in contact with them. Then the Intifadah began in 1986 or 1987. We were concerned with the occupied territories and what was happening there. Then, in 1989 the events in the south began and in 1990 the Iraqi events began. We held activities in the college. We would stage protests and we were involved in this public work, which was an essential part of student work. Students cannot be concerned with student issues if they are not concerned with public maters, especially during that period. We established the student union in 1990 or 1991. Democracy began and we formed the student union. That was a wonderful phase. The beginning of democracy. Afterwards, parties were established and they were made public and open. I was part of the parties and played a role in one of the parties: The Democratic Popular Unity Party if you have heard of it. That's all. What else do you want to know?

**NP:** What were the different political parties at that time?

**AZ:** There was the Communist Party, the Palestinian trends, at a time there was the Democratic Front, the Popular Front, Fatah was here as well. There were the Islamists. The Islamic Action Front was the most active. Excuse me.

**NP:** In 1989 there were the incidents in the south. Were there any protests or...

**AZ:** Demonstrations?

**NP:** Yes. In Amman?

**AZ:** There is something very important. In college, the work of the students and their main concern was, like I said, the Palestinian issue, student work, and the Jordanian concern was also on the table of course. The Jordanian regime would infiltrate the universities using students themselves from trends opposing the free thinking trends. They would try to use the east bankers, the Jordanian-Jordanian youths to face students who thought about this matter. They would feed them ideas that these people were against the country and the regime. That they want to cause problems like what happened in 1970. The Palestinian and Jordanian problems in 1970. They would incite the east bankers against anyone thinking of reform in the country. They would use the fact that east bankers were poor; the youths suffered poverty, to their advantage, in addition to their poor political experiences and the cultural differences, even with those in Amman. They would use them to suppress the protests. We held demonstrations on several days in support of Palestine or anything that concerns the country. We were suppressed by students, which caused problems. In 1989, when the bread issue happened and the collapse of the Jordanian dinar, the south rose, which is where I am from, Al-Karak. The army entered the area of course and began to beat people. I'm sure you've heard of the problems that happened. During this time we began to stage protests in support of the events in the south. Afterwards, they arrested several politically active youths in the university. The politicized girls were who were left for the most part. One of the good points that I always remember is that the east banker youths, who we had political problems with, started to think: That the Jordanian regime is saying these people are against the country, reform, and the likes but look at what you are doing to our people who are speaking up about bread and hunger. You are storming them with tanks and killing them. There was a change in them. They started asking about what is happening. These are good people who take to the streets for us as well, not just for Palestine and the university. I remember a nice incident where these youths, who used to suppress us in our protests as college students, approached me and several girls, including girls from the occupied territories, and said: You need to organize a demonstration right now (in 1989) for the people and we will protect the protest. The point I want to make is there is work within politics to divide people so that they do not become aware of their interests. They are pushing people into wrong struggles, which are not the people's real struggle. They cause struggles between the north and the south in Jordan, between Muslims and Christians, between Palestinians and Jordanians. All these struggles are to keep people in the dark and to prevent the public from organizing themselves for their interests. I went out to protests and made banners. We went out and chanted and these youths were the ones who protected the protest and were with us the whole time. This was an important point. Of course, in 1989, my father, husband, and my whole family in addition to many youths here were very involved in the protests. My uncle was imprisoned. It was a valuable experience and very important for the Jordanian street to know it was not an issue of Palestinian-Jordanian like in 1970. No. It was an issue of food and bread. That there were people who wanted to steal at the expense of the people. Do you understand? This is the issue. I don't know if you have any other questions. What do you want to know?

 **NP:** When you returned to the town, was it hard? Was it hard to live in a small town after you lived in the city? How...

**AZ:** How did I feel?

**NP:** Yes.

**AZ:** Listen, when I was in college I met people from different social classes. I met people from very high classes with a lot of money and I met people from refugee camps. I also met people from the occupied territories, some of whom were well off financially, better than some people here. I was involved in the Palestinian cause more than I was in the Jordanian issues. Though I still give them my attention but the Palestinian cause more than anything. If you remember in the 80's the Intifadah garnered much interest. When I returned here, I worked in an area called Al-Aliyah in Ras al-Mujah. Palestinian and Jordanian families reside in that area, which is one of the poorest areas in the south. A bus would take me there and bring me home. College students would be in the bus with me. Mu'tah University was in the area. I remember that the youths who would get on the bus were in ratty clothes. There was poverty and despair. You could feel it. I would cry in the bus because there is a huge difference between Amman and here and because we are a people that suffers a great injustice and the youths are marginalized, poor, and don't know anything. They don't have anything and there is nothing on the horizon for the area. Honestly, in the beginning it caused me great psychological distress because, even those in Amman who worked in politics, had money. There was Amman life. People would go out and stay out late. They would get together. Guys and girls would sit together in college, it was not an issue. You felt like there was a life: There were movie theaters, people walked in the streets, there was a margin of freedom, the youth had something at least. When I came here I would look at people and think: My God! There is a problem in my country. I felt responsible for what was happening. That Jordan needs me and Palestine is an important cause but there is something important here in the town too. There is suffering. The school I taught at was a house, not a school, a rented house comprised of three rooms. I taught third and fourth graders together in the same room. The classrooms were joint. Fifth and sixth graders were in the same room. They were poor. I would get them clothes from my friends in Amman. We would give them baths at the school. We would prepare food and feed them. Basically, I saw poverty. The issue is huge, huge, in the town. From here... you understand, a girl who was involved in student affairs, the student union, the Palestinian cause, and public work but... no, there is a problem in this country that I must work on. From this... I was involved in a party and continue to be involved. I did not... That's all. I don't have anything else. What do you want to say? Of course, there was a big problem as far as I was concerned. There is a gap. I lost contact with my friends and the general atmosphere of Amman with the intellects and public work. Work for females is more limited here because women cannot take to the streets like we did in college or to rally people here. We work within a limited circle that is appropriate to the tribal and family system so... of course in the beginning I was limited to some extent to the education sector by the government. They focused on the fact that I had security issues. So anything that happened -- if a held a picture of the king they would get a call that I held the king's picture. There was a lot of focus on me if I said anything. I tried to get involved into associations concerned with women's issues. People also warned each other about dealing with me. Calling me an extremist, not a liberal that is close to the government. You are always surrounded, do you understand? Especially if you do not have female friends like you whom you talk to. Honestly, this caused me some psychological problems. But if you are strong from the inside and reorganize your ideas you can overcome this phase and you can live right. That's it.

**NP:** Did you participate in professional association activities?

**AZ:** I joined the professional association in 2010. In March of 2010 we began our work. Of course, I did not start it. It was started by other youths. Another group of youths started it in Amman. I remember I saw the advertisement on JoSat (television station). I talked to my husband about the possibility of a teachers association, that people are discussing it. In the beginning I thought... Samir Al-Rifa'i was the prime minister and, as you know, he is young, as is the king, so I thought that there is a leaning in the country by the king and the prime minister to grant some degree of democracy because they are liberals and that is how they think. Also, the queen was giving her attention to the education sector so I thought that this may be a step by the government and all we have to do is start. So, I spoke to my husband and told him that I want to attend the first meeting to see what was going on. I went to Amman and the meeting was held at the Teachers Club. I did not know anyone there. I did not know any of the attendees, even those from here. I went and met the people there. The group that was there. There were people from all sectors. They started saying that they want to establish a teachers association, that they wanted to demand it, and that they wanted to enter the club, there was a teachers club established by the government 25 or 27 years ago as an alternative to the association. It was called the Teachers Club. The monthly membership fee was 1 JD and you could attend the parties they hold but that was it. It had nothing to do with the teachers' association demands. Of course, per usual, we met each other and registered our names. This is how we started our work. We exchanged phone numbers and tried to enter the club but the government prevented us. They prevented us from holding the meeting. Of course, I had security experiences with the government so expected that something would happen but I still wasn't sure. I still did not know who are the people who called for the meeting or what their background was. I did see some people I knew from college and that was comforting. We agreed to meet again the following Saturday. The same thing happened. We met the next Saturday and matters were a little more organized and we knew each other a little bit more. The government did the same thing and prevented us from entering very forcefully bringing in forces and security forces, giving the situation an air of security. We wondered why. They should have let people speak. What was the big deal? Why did they make a big deal out of it? Let the people gather and say they want an association and demand it then you can reject the idea but let people gather. The right to gather at our club is normal. That is the security mentality. It will never change. Afterwards, the issue with the Minister of Education happened. In a news conference he said: Instead of demanding an association dress properly. The pictures showed men in traditional Thubs and dishdashes with long beards and what not. He said: Go dress properly and then come and demand an association. Of course, this provoked people. Why did it provoke them? I am giving you an idea about the educational sector in Jordan. There is a lot of bureaucracy. Teachers were very marginalized. We could not question any directives you receive or any rule that is imposed. All you have to do is implement it. That was the situation of teachers. The school principal could make you get out of your chair if you're sitting in a chair in the class room. There was no humanitarian aspect at all regarding teachers. They did not even have a role in the curriculum that is taught. You have to abide by the curriculum you receive and you must teach regardless of your beliefs or what you think. You are not allowed to criticize or start a discussion. Over 10 years it was difficult for me to broach any political issue with my students because I was monitored by the security forces and I could have been fired from work, punished, or be targeted.

TAPE 2

**Adma Zuriekat:** Therefore, ideologically, teachers could not practice any ideology. There was a stifling bureaucracy. There was no freedom. They were marginalized with regards to educational policy and the curriculum. They were in really bad shape economically. The work conditions were very difficult. Sometimes they had to walk long distances. For example, I used to work in an area where there was no bus route. I had to walk between an hour and an hour and a half by foot to find a bus. I suffered a lot. This was the case in the summer and the winter. The condition of the schools was bad for the teachers. Some people had rheumatism or medical problems. All of this caused teachers stress. The economic situation was bad and did not suit... The educational system in and of itself is not humanitarian neither for the teachers nor the students. The system caused constant strife, problems, and... When I first started I was responsible for the school bell and had to make sure the students cued up. I had to always be in the recess area running after the students. For God's sake! I studied math. What am I doing? Why am I running after the students? Do you understand? This causes... The educational system is poor. I'm sure what I felt was felt by everyone. This went on for years in Jordan. Years. The bigger problem was that there was no respect. In the end I was dealing with everything but I was not even respected. Even society, based on your difficult economic situation, the society felt that you were low. One of the lower classes. In society... regardless of what I was, even if I were a teacher and the economy was poor, people considered you beneath them. Do you understand? This was a problem. Respect becomes an issue between a teacher and the students, between the parents and the teacher, between the administration and the teacher. What did all of this result in? It caused a state of suppression. It resulted in something that was on the verge of exploding quickly. That is why, when the minister of education said what he said it was like: We are people who are being patient despite everything in the country and despite all of our suffering for the sake of our country, you, a minister, who is supposed to respect me, are mocking my ragged clothes because I'm poor? They considered it an insult and that was the spark that lit in the country. Of course, before the protests began, I was working on gathering signatures from students and teachers. That was where I began. When we were done with the first meeting, I prepared a petition and started to collect signatures from teachers, who wrote their names and noted if they wanted an association or not then signed. This was where I started before the large-scale protests began. The head of the department of education I fall under summoned me and threatened me. He said that the Intelligence Directorate contacted him telling me that this did not concern me and that it was none of my business and what not. I laughed and said: Ok I'll do it in the afternoon. He said it is prohibited for you to do that even then when you're done with work. I told him I understand that while I'm in school that makes sense but after work? He said, even then. I asked: What do you think I should cook? What would you like me to cook? You want to interfere in what I do after work? That was a problem. After the minister said what he did the large-scale protests began in the schools. I mean that's when it all blew up. The most protests were in my area. In Al-Qasr, which is... this district. The district where I am then it spread to Al-Karak and the protests began in Al-Karak. Please give me a break so I can go smoke a cigarette.

**Nicola Pratt:** Ok

**AZ:** We are going to talk about my experience with the Islamists and how they are... the same thing... and I think that what happened in the Teachers Association in Jordan as a model... it's a miniature model for what could have happened in every area in the Arab World. The protests began among the teachers. As far as I'm concerned I could not imagine... or rather I expected that degree of hatred that existed but because I do not have relations among the males and how their youths are thinking. You know I teach in an all girls school so there were no relationships for me to know how the men think and how suffocated they are and how many problems they have. I knew that they had problems because there were problems with the education in the boys schools. The level deteriorated and they started getting second jobs. The government started passing laws that second jobs were prohibited and they did not abide by the law and still tutored students outside of school. The problem was bigger among the males than the females. We only taught in the schools. Women tend to care for their professions more. The men need money and ... you know. The men are responsible for families and they strive to build a house and own it. So, they worked outside the schools. Therefore, the quality of teaching in the boys schools deteriorated. It was worse than... When they exploded, the men started. Women were not a part of it at all in the beginning of the teacher protests. It was mostly men. I was surprised by the degree of violence. They were crushed inside that came out in their slogans and chants, in the challenge they faced. To me, this was an experience that I have to shed some light on and I understood it well. I saw that there was a problem. That these people had a lot to say and there is awareness. They are not working haphazardly out of their disappointment. No. They knew what they wanted and what their problems are and what they're doing stems from that. The protests began. Many people participated. For example, my first experience, I was the first woman to announce a strike and that the girls school, where I was the principal, was announcing that it was on strike and that I would join the men. I left the school and participated in the protests that had already begun. I rose to the platform wanting to announce a strike with them so we could begin the organization on how to do this. I remember that some people chanted slogans against me. That this woman is in a party and works in politics. They chanted that they reject party members. I remember that that was the first chant. I thanked them and told them that I came to show my solidarity and that I want to work with them but that we needed to organize our work properly. I stepped down from the platform and withdrew but I continued the strike with them. I was joined by a teacher who was my friend and a she was a principal of a school. She came and there was another one who was into politics who was also a school principal. She joined the strike. We were the only three women with the men at the protests. Those who attended were of different backgrounds, the men who spoke were from different backgrounds. There were some Islamists, nationalists, leftists, and... but in general they were speaking as teachers. They spoke about the suffering of teachers and did not discuss politics. Most of the slogans were the demands: We want an association, we want dignity from the minister -- which is translated into his resignation -- and we wanted our financial situation to be improved. We wanted better salaries. These were the slogans that were presented for the most part. The protests continued for two weeks. The government imposed a media blackout. The media was not reporting... the people in Irbid and Amman did not know that there were protests in Al-Karak. The teachers were separated in the media. This went on for two weeks. The government sent mediators. They sent ministers, deputy ministers, anyone but dealing with them was completely rejected. They did not begin direct dialogue The protests went on for two weeks and the students were out of school and all that. We did not deal with them. There was heavy mobilization. The other southern areas like Madaba, excuse me, like Al-Tafilah and Ma’an began to mobilize as well. That's when the media started dealing with the issue. The electronic media was reporting. The news websites were reporting. We started to contact journalists and tell them what was going on so they would write about our situation. We wanted them to help a little bit. We then started to contact other associations and we started to talk to other parties saying that the government was completely marginalizing us and we asked that they work in Amman and other areas. Tell people about what is happening. That is how we began to spread the issue and get involved with the local society so they could help us in the matter. Afterwards the government conceded that it needed to meet with us. We had our first meeting with the government. We met with Deputy Prime Minister Raja'i al-Mu'ashir. His Excellency Raja'i al-Mu'ashir. Before that meeting with Raja'i al-Mu'ashir we began to work on organizing ourselves. To only stage protests needed some organization. We had to find a way to organize ourselves. So we held elections in the schools to find representatives for all the areas and we formed a committee to monitor the work and negotiate with the government. This, of course, was a wonderful experience. As a woman, I did not assume a role quickly. I always stress that to women saying don't think that they would easily let a woman be in charge of anything. We went after forming committees to negotiate with the government the first time. Some of the men did not have previous experiences in public work so the government was able to manipulate them. They would come back and withdraw from working with us. You can say that several of the men failed here. The men we sent to negotiate with the government. In the end I was forced to enter the battle of representation. To become a representative and I was successful in representing my area. Of course the government worked on the matter and did its best to prevent this woman from being there as a representative because they knew my background very well. I became one of the people speaking on behalf of the teachers and I was the only woman in the kingdom. Afterwards, our work spread and all parts of the kingdom became a part of this work via the websites and civil society organizations. There were protests in Amman, the south, and the north. The kingdom as a whole. During the first meeting with the deputy prime minister. Excuse me, the first meeting was with the prime minister and his final answer was that there would not be an association and the minister would not be forced to resign. He talked about the bad economic condition and... Of course, I personally was shocked. I thought: Oh My God! You studied in the US and Britain and you are a liberal and you are a man who supports an open economy. You are a business man who is exposed to the West. Why, when you are a prime minister here, responsible for the people... How can you see the West as an example for you regarding the economy and you are benefiting from it but you do not see it as an example for democracy, people's lives, and popular participation? That's when I felt that these people are working for themselves more than they are working for the country. I thought that the idea I had of the prime minister possibly supporting the idea of an association was wrong. I felt that he was weak, even in his dealings with people. The alternative was Raja’i al-Mu'ashir. Dr. Raja'i al-Mu'ashir is a liberal figure but is close to the people and speaks to them. Our first meeting with him went well. We felt good. He did not grant us an association but he spoke about giving teachers some form of representation. Not an association but something that would abide by the constitution and... Because the Jordanian constitution prohibits the formation of the association and what not. We felt that he was someone we could deal with. During that meeting, we organized ourselves all over the kingdom. There was some organization in what we called the National Committee for Reviving the Teachers Association. The national committees were in the form of a pyramid. We held elections in all the schools in the kingdom. They selected representatives and formed smaller committees then they formed a larger committee, which would hold dialogue with the government. It was comprised of 13 people. I was the only woman in the committee as a representative. Of course they chose me... after the elections, some men felt ashamed that this woman continues to stand with us and attends the meetings regardless of her difficult situation. They wondered how I could make it. I proved my worth. During this meeting I was the first to announce that there should be utilization.. that dealing with the government was difficult, dialogue is difficult so we need strong tools to pressure it so it will hear you. I stressed the issue of using the high school exams, boycotting the corrections. We were supposed to correct the exams. This was a tough blow to the government. That is where I began my dialogue with the government with the committee. We worked to... After a while, of course, I was fired from work. I was not fired per say but they referred me to provisional retirement, which is a decision that is made against employees either... of course this is at the request of the employee. Provisional retirement decisions are at the request of the employee, which is the norm. I would request being referred to provisional retirement at a certain age by which I get about a quarter of my salary until I reach retirement age, when I take me salary as a whole. I had worked for 17 years and I was referred to provisional retirement. I was the youngest person in service among the employees and they referred around 27 people. Some of them were involved in the teachers' movement in general. They were activists. But the majority of them were Islamists who had no involvement in the teachers' movement. This is where we see how the government began to cause problems between the popular movements by inserting the Islamists in a matter that they were not at the forefront of. The Islamists were not the leaders in the movement nor were they moving the process of the teacher protests. They were individuals. I even asked some of their leaders and youths: Has there been a partisan decision to participate? And their answer was no. Why? I said I wanted a female sector of teachers to join us. If there are females in the ranks of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) let them join us in the protests. We are only 3-4 females. We need greater female participation. They said that no decision was made. When the government referred us to provisional retirement, which was a security strike against us, they included 27 men from the IAF. When I saw them, they said that they do not know why they were referred because they did not participate in the protests or anything. The government inserted them into the battle because the government knows how to utilize them and because these people sit at the table and hold dialogue with the government. They know how to work with the government and they worked with the government for their partisan interests. I think that it wanted to put them in the forefront. It wanted to put them in the forefront. I think that not only the government wanted to put them in the forefront but those outside did as well. I remember that Al-Jazirah, when it first reported on the protests in Jordan, showed images of female teachers wearing the Hijab (veil) and bearded teachers wearing the traditional thub. Even Al-Jazirah wanted the IAF to be at the forefront as those in control of the popular movements and the protests and what not, but in reality they did not have a political decision, even though the other nationalist and leftist parties did not have an issue. They had not made a decision and their females did not participate. Their female sector did not participate in any way and their men did not participate in the name of the IAF, rather, as individuals and many of their members were in the schools not participating. But when we worked in order to return to teaching and to fight the government again after its decision we worked in everyone's names. The IAF or not, work was unified. If you are a teacher and were treated unjustly then we need to work for you. Our work was general. That's all. What... There is a lot to say. If you have any questions up to this point then go ahead. What questions do you have regarding this period?

**NP:** During this time, were there protests in other sectors? For example, laborers or factories, or...

**AZ:** We... Like I told you, we started... Other sectors began to hear our demands, we had greater media coverage and in local society, and there was a social dialogue between teachers and local residents. The protests happened so schools were closed, so parents... There was an important dialogue. Teachers had meaningful dialogue with the street and the streets saw that the teachers were right and are not only speaking for themselves, but for all other sectors. The other protests began after us of course. The port employees started before us. Before us, the port employees started, then we started then all the other sectors began. In the public sector as well, not in the private sector, in the public sector. There were protests in all locations and private companies as well. The Phosphate Company and Potash Company. There were protests in the Lands Authority, in all government ministries. There were demands saying: We are like them. We want are situation to be improved. There is bureaucracy. We want the work system to improve. People Started to think and organize themselves. So, yes, teachers started to energize political parties for public work. New popular movements were formed in the form of ... for example the military retirees movement was formed. It did not exist before and it came into existence after the teachers movement. There were east banker protests and they became extremist with direct contacts with the regime and the king and his work. A lot going on there. Afterwards, corruption issues began to be revealed. Information was revealed to the people that they did not know before. People started to talk. People in their institutions were able to speak up about corruption in so and so. Money was stolen and ... lands were sold and there is domination. There is a big problem, corruption being the most important one. After the situation with the teachers people became bolder and dared to speak up. The rise began in the country and the protest movement then popular movements were organized. The youths began... the teachers were a part of these popular movements. The popular movements benefited from the teachers and how they organized themselves. They organized themselves and formed joint committees among the governorates. They issued joint statements and demanded reform and what not. I think teachers played a very important role. Afterwards we... The elections began. The elections were an experience that ... was difficult. Similar to what happened in Egypt. We formed an important body, namely the National Committee for Reviving the Teachers Association, with the correct structure that stemmed from great efforts and it was of importance. Its word meant something and had an effect within the teachers' sector. I think that the government saw that this new structured body is very dangerous. It was dangerous because these people cannot be manipulated. You cannot cut a deal with them because they people are only looking at their interests. Therefore, dealing with them is difficult. That is why this body had to be broken and brought to an end and to have it replaced by a body that can be part of a dialogue easily. During the elections, you know that Arabs... yes, it's true they depend on a structure but they still have idols for popular movements. If you bring these popular movement idols into a deal with the government they could cause a huge problem. When we wanted to prepare the electoral lists, the IAF interfered in the matter. You could say that the IAF has the right to do so as a political party. During our popular movement as teachers we dealt with the matter as teachers, a profession. We never brought politics or political parties into it. I would not speak in my capacity as a member of a leftist or nationalist party. We would speak and say: You're a teacher and you work in a profession. We respected each other on the basis of how hard one works for their cause regardless of whom you are or who supports you. The most important thing, even if you represented the government that was ok, but if you respected the work and worked within our frame work and rules and if you respect what we are doing and you fight the right way, not betraying it, then you are respected. There was no dividing of shares, no political shares. Many of the teachers who worked did not have political affiliations because the teachers' sector, due to the martial laws and out of fear for their jobs for many years, did not have partisan affiliations. Very few of them did have party affiliations. There were many people in the popular movement. When we wanted to start forming lists for the elections the IAF interfered and asked for a political share. This caused a state of shock. When it became an issue of political shares, the others were not prepared for this. Some people worked very hard and paid the price monetarily and with their time and effort. They were also pursued by the security forces but they were not affiliated with a political party to nominate them. Where was their representation? Unfortunately, some people cooperated with the IAF and divided the national committee. They divided it and formed lists. They used religion in the elections, which has nothing to do with it. Afterwards they caused the destruction of the national committee and the idea and they took control of the association. Thank you. I ran in the elections with an opposing bloc of course against the Muslim Brotherhood, not because they were the brotherhood but because the way they worked was wrong. You cannot join lists and decide that this person can join or not, deciding to have 5 or 4 join or not. There was a huge problem so I was forced to run with another bloc opposing the IAF bloc. I was subjected to moral and political slander as a woman that was really bad.... Of course I did not win in the elections and their bloc won.

TAPE 3

**Adma Zuriekat:** That's it. Many political commentaries were written on the issue and about my role, about what happened with me and the IAF. My party issued a political statement afterwards in which it condemned how the IAF is taking advantage of the peoples' issues, teachers. Let the popular movement be. It is too early for them to reap the fruits of the labor. Let the people work and organize. Let them make mistakes and correct their mistakes. Let them work. But it appears that there are joint interests between the IAF and the Jordanian regime and the system in this country. As far as I was concerned the idea of professionalism in the work we were doing ended. The idea of the national committee was destroyed. I think it was a great organizational structure for our work. That is all. The association continued and it continues to work.

**Nicola Pratt:** Are you upset?

**AZ:** No. Listen. I am not upset. I work in politics and those who work in politics have to read how people across from them think. I have my personal reading of them. Even regarding the regime's collaboration with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) I understand how the regime thinks and I know that there is great contradiction between them now and I know how the regime is aiming painful blows now to the MB in a certain way. I also know that the MB has a degree of stupidity in their dealings. They felt at one point that they were promised something big in the country. They wanted to send messages to the British and US embassies that they represent the country as a whole, regardless of the way they worked among the people of course. It was completely void of morals. Very simply I could say that Nicola is an infidel and has no morals and therefore, a backwards society is what works. They have beards and ... this was their method using the religion. They were very into the idea of the association so that they could send a message abroad that they can rule Jordan if there is a change in the kingdom. I understood this message and was aware of it. I think that they had support from the West, including the former Prime Minister Awn al-Khasawinah, he supported this idea. I know exactly how things went. I am not upset. I set the foundation for an association, for an important civil society in this society. Awareness does not come easily. It requires generations. What is important is that we formed the institution and established it. Generations will fight, they will rise and fall, the flow of union work will improve and face downfalls, some people will attack it and destroy it but it exists and I think that people have now moved on to a phase of awareness different from that of the past. Many walls were broken. Many people will maintain it. It will achieve gains. It will. I am very happy about this accomplishment. What am I upset about? I am upset that... I am upset because when you have hope that a great thing will continue and that no one will harm it too much but you find that there are personal interests. Some people are working from the outside and from the inside. It is not about a teachers’ association; rather, it is about an economic system, political around us, and interests abroad in the region. The country needs to continue moving in a certain direction. I understand this, I am not upset. That's it.

**NP:** Your experience is important and vast but it was also difficult, so why is it important to you to continue in public work?

**AZ:** You cannot understand something and close your eyes to it. You are... you... I mean... When you understand something it is difficult to think, you do not understand it. I mean you are living in a society that affects your daughters. My daughters will live in this society for example, so I have to work on it. You cannot see something wrong and not say that I don't see it. That is not who I am. Some people see it but are more interests in their interests, within the system they ask what they can gain. For me to utilize this knowledge for myself not for the society, this is the problem I face in dealing with people. You think some people are honest for such a long time but there is a certain line where they are looking out for themselves and are not continuing. These are the people that exhaust me. Why don't you finish what you started? Why are you looking out for your own interests and then forget? This is what the regime utilizes. The regime knows these people and manipulates them a lot. Sometimes the regime puts them at the forefront, they support them to be in the forefront, so they can be a bad model for the people around them, right? I met many people and I supported them and helped them be at the forefront, they were good models for some time but then they looked out for themselves. Maybe they get tired, maybe they suffer economic situations, but this is not an excuse. We all get tired. This is the problem. People are not following through. Some people do while others don't. The government manipulates these people a lot. For example, for some time, they focused on the fact that I was female, a lot of people started to talk to my husband saying: She's a woman. What is she working? Why is she working? Why does she leave her house to work? This is not acceptable. Why is she the only woman doing this? Are there no men left? Why does she go out and leave her house and daughter? Go help your girls study, that is better. Cook for your husband. Do you understand the pressure they used? I worked with some people who I trusted but they went and worked in their own interests, family, children, money and posts. This is life, right?

**NP:** Does your husband help you in your work?

**AZ:** Of course. My husband has the same beliefs and he has no problem with it. I would go during the night to Amman driving on my own and I would return 10 or 11 pm and he did not mind. Financially he has no problem as well. Even my daughters support me. I have support. I have support in the family. My husband has no problem at all. Of course, if your husband objects then it is hard to move. But he gives me great support, which is a sense of comfort for me. He faces pressures from society that his wife is working with men... What else would you like to know?

 **NP:** Do you hope that your daughters become activists like you as well?

 **AZ:** Yes, of course. My daughters think like us. They hear us a lot. My husband and I... our lives are politics almost 24 hours a day. We watch the news a lot and what is happening around us. We read and the girls are affected by us in a good way. They are analyzing and sympathizing with matters and people. They are exceptional among their generation in the way they think. I am very happy about that and I think that what is happening with them is important. I am happy and I feel good about their performance outside the house. Compared to their piers... they are thinking the right way. They do not discriminate between Jordanian and Palestinians or Arab and non-Arabs. There is no religious discrimination. They oppose that. They sympathize with the poor and the simple people. They respect opposite opinions. Regardless of whether they agree or not you see them dealing with matters correctly. This is important to me. It is comforting to me and their father of course. I think I am bringing them up right. I feel good but I am not comfortable with the environment that does not encourage these children to utilize their capabilities and for their awareness to be brought out in society because it is a traditional society with simple resources. I work with them within my capabilities. I help them. I have no problem with that.

**NP:** Would you like to say something else?

**AZ:** What would you like us to talk about? What issue would you like to discuss?

**NP:** About your experiences and...

**AZ:** We can talk about the female sector in the country a little bit. It is an important issue. Through my experience with the teachers... There was a qualitative change in awareness and practicing democracy from when we started to the end. I think that the experience of the association and the popular movement regarding it established an awareness that was not easy. It would have taken hundreds of year. I think that even the civil society institutions concerned with women did not work all these years as much as the teachers’ movement worked. You know that the highest rate of representation of female teachers is in this sector, for women it is the teaching sector. There was a qualitative change and there is a great difference between the start and the finish. They are now practicing democracy, they are ... They are thinking and following up association work. They are aware within the association. They participate in the elections in great numbers but still the mentality of being religious and the religion continues to control the sector more than any among males. I will give you a piece of information: During the elections, more men voted for me than women. I was accepted and my work was more appreciated by the men and more men voted for me than women. I was fought by the women not the men. Of course there were many reasons. First of all it was a matter of awareness. There was no monitoring of my work. Then men followed my performance in the council and he discussions with the government more than the women so they knew how much I cared for the cause... Like I mentioned the religious aspect and trust among women is still poor. We lack trust among women. You know that male domination over them was an issue, not to mention their faith in themselves. If she lacks self confidence that is a problem. Now I see that things are changing. There is improvement. Over the past three years there has been a great difference. That is why I always tell the female sector working in civil society institutions when I meet with them, I tell them I lost because of the women not the men. Adding that women need to face this issue. Our problem is that civil society institutions care for women regarding prestige more than holding conferences and forums and meetings. They do not deal with the important aspects of the female sector. Do you understand? It does not extend to that on the ground. An elite group of women are in charge and they do not mix so their effect was very small on awareness. This of course affected us at the beginning of the protests it was a problem for us because women and girls schools were not involved in association work. The idea of association work was hard for them to understand because the association was linked to politics and women fear politics. When did they get involved? This is important. When did the female sector feel.. or rather when did the female teachers sector move? When there was a financial demand. When there was a wages increase demand. Women began to receive the idea more simplified so they felt that it was important for their homes and children so they moved. It was not the idea of the association. What I want to get at is that people are moved by the economy. The economy is what moves any group or movement. Not to mention dignity of course. Dignity is linked to the economy first and foremost or with democracy. How much democracy is there? But economic factors are more important to the people than democracy. This is important. In the beginning when the issue of an association was on the table the women did not move but when economy became an issue the women moved. Now I see that there is a link between the association and the economy. That the association is the one that protects your economic gains and the rules and regulations between you and the government to ensure your dignity, ideology, and entity as teachers in society. It is getting better. Therefore I consider it an important experience even for the female sector.