

Bayan بیان ביאן

The Arabs in Israel הערבים בישראל

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From the Editor's Desk

This issue of *Bayan* contains two essays. The first is Adv. Nidal Othman's essay on the economic crisis among businesses in Arab society as a result of the State of Israel's response to the Corona epidemic. The second is Dr. Nuzha Allasad Alhuzail's discussion of the status of women in Bedouin society in the Negev from a historical and current perspective.

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The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation (KAP) was established in 2004 by the German Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Tel Aviv University as part of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. KAP is an expansion of the Program on Arab Politics in Israel established by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Tel Aviv University in 1995. The purpose of KAP is to deepen the knowledge and understanding of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel through conferences, public lectures and workshops, as well as research studies, publications and documentation.

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Nidal Othman * / The Story of a Restaurant during the Corona Epidemic: A Period of Crisis for Businesses in the Arab Sector

96% of the businesses in Arab society are small and miniature businesses, most of which are not defined as "essential enterprises". As a result, they were shut down during part of the Corona crisis.

The model of distance working and working from home is not common in Arab society. Only a miniscule proportion of Arab businesses have the potential to operate in this mode and as a result the Corona crisis took a heavy toll on businesses in Arab society.

The government made state-guaranteed loans available to small and medium-sized businesses; however, the conditions for eligibility were difficult to fulfil for Arab-owned businesses. Most of the loan applications were rejected, and businesses that managed to meet the conditions were awarded much smaller loans than they had requested. Their financial distress has led many business owners to take out gray market loans at exorbitant interest rates.

It is recommended that an interministerial forum be created with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Security, the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Economy in cooperation with the Committee of Arab Mayors, with the goal of keeping Arab business owners from entering a vicious circle of crime and violence as a result of the debt they have been forced to take on.

Arab business owners need to become organized, whether at the national or local level.

The city of Tamra is located in the Western Galilee, near Haifa. The city has a culinary reputation based on its approximately twenty top-end restaurants, which host hundreds and even thousands of diners each day, most of them from outside the city. This is the situation in normal times but the Corona virus that is currently rampant all over the world has not skipped over Tamra or its businesses, most of which are in the small and miniature category.

As an example of the seriousness of the crisis, in what follows I will describe the situation of one of those businesses. The owner (let's call him Ali instead of his real name) is aged 32 and is the son of older middle-income parents. He finished studying to be a lawyer and received his degree but did not manage to find work in a market flooded with lawyers who are already having a hard time making a living. Most of them are forced to open up their own offices since there are no law offices willing to hire them. Ali decided to go into business and opened a restaurant in one of the buildings built on the main street of Tamra without a permit. He obtained bank loans in order to finance some of his expenses and his family also helped him out by investing most of their savings in the new business. Beside the restaurant, Ali opened an open-air events venue. The business opened its doors in 2015 and Ali was able to

* **Nidal Othman** is the deputy mayor of Tamra. He is a social and political activist, a lawyer by profession and an advisor for community organizing and project development.

enjoy the fruits of his labor. The restaurant drew customers all year round and he hosted events of up to 300 guests in the high season.

The restaurant has an area of about 300 square meters and the open-air events venue, which is active primarily in the spring and summer, has about 600 square meters of space. The cost of leasing these areas is NIS 14,000 per month and municipal taxes are about NIS 7,000 per month. The restaurant employs about 20 workers and its average monthly revenue is NIS 400 thousand, or about NIS 5 million annually.

According to the law, the restaurant is defined as a “small business” in accordance with Government Decision 2190 from 2007. A small business is defined as one with less than 50 workers and an annual turnover of up to NIS 25 million. As a result, there are almost no “mid-sized” businesses in Tamra, which are defined as having up to 100 workers and an annual turnover of up to NIS 100 million.

It is worth mentioning that according to the definition of the Central Bureau of Statistics,¹ 96 percent of employers in the Arab sector are small and miniature businesses and according to its data about 66 percent of Arab employees work in such businesses. Moreover, the annual turnover of 54 percent of Arab-owned businesses is less than NIS 500 thousand.

On March 15, 2020, the restaurant closed its doors in compliance with the government directives at the start of the Corona crisis. All of the restaurant workers were laid off: 12 of them were sent on unpaid vacation and they were eligible for unemployment benefits while the other eight were not eligible and therefore were left without any income. Even then, those eligible for unemployment benefits received very low support in accordance with their reported wage. Ali, the owner, had to deal with large debts and commitments, as well as paying the monthly rent for the restaurant. The restaurant’s storage space is full of inventory, consisting of goods bought for prescheduled events. Furthermore, the restaurant cannot make the adjustment to the delivery business since its menu is not appropriate for that kind of activity.

The crisis

As mentioned above, about 96 percent of the businesses in the Arab sector are defined as being in the small and miniature categories and most of them are not considered to be “essential enterprises”. Many of them, including restaurants, clothing stores, gift shops, etc., have closed up. Employees of the local authority, law offices and other service providers have been sent on unpaid vacation and have applied for unemployment benefits. The number of workers sent home in the Arab community in the first wave of Corona (since mid-March 2020) is about 180,000.

The low level of unemployment benefits received by these workers is the result of the regrettable phenomenon in the Arab labor market of paying less than minimum wage, particularly in the case of female workers in small and miniature businesses in the Arab towns. Thus, the unemployment benefit paid to those who are eligible is

¹ Uri Attar, *Demography of Businesses – Survival and Movements of Businesses, 2016–18*, Central Bureau of Statistics, July 28, 2019. [Hebrew]

determined by reported income and therefore these individuals cannot provide for the basic needs of their families. Moreover, since their income has fallen drastically, so has their purchasing power and this has reduced the sales of essential businesses that have stayed open.

Ali, whose restaurant used to earn about NIS 400 thousand on average per month, received compensation from the Income Tax Authority of about NIS 6,000 per month. Meanwhile, during each of March, April and May his rental expenditure was NIS 14,000.

Distance working

The model of distance working and working from home is not very common in the Arab community and in most Arab-owned businesses workers must be physically present. Only a tiny proportion of Arab businesses are able to operate through distance working or working from home and therefore the Corona crisis has imposed a heavy price on them. The lion's share of these businesses need their workers to be present (restaurants, shuttling, tourism, etc.). Moreover, the method of distance working is not an accepted part of the work culture in the Arab sector in Israel.

The local authorities and businesses in the Arab community during the crisis and following it

The Corona crisis and the decision to close most of the businesses in the country have led to a public discussion of the crisis' effect on businesses. There are those who have tried to estimate the effect of the economic crisis that is expected as a result of the Corona crisis. The local authorities in the Arab community have begun to think about measures and initiatives in order to minimize the potential damage, including the encouragement of purchases from local businesses; encouraging lessors to exempt closed businesses from paying rent; creation of forums for economic counselling, including financial advice to individual businesses; and requests to banks in Arab towns and to the banks' management to ease the burden on their business customers.

A document prepared by the Knesset Research and Information Center entitled "The agreement for compensation of local authorities for municipal tax discounts to businesses due to the Corona crisis – a budget analysis by sector",² states that the rate of non-residential municipal tax within the total municipal tax collected in the Arab community is 32 percent, in the Jewish sector it is 53.1 percent and in mixed Jewish-Arab cities it is 64 percent, while the national average is 55.4 percent. Thus the rate of revenue from non-residential municipal tax in the Arab community is lower than that in the Jewish community and lower than the national average. Nonetheless, the rate of non-residential municipal tax is about one-third of the total revenue of the local authorities. In Tamra, the rate is 27 percent, which is even lower than the average for the Arab community. Of course, a crisis among businesses in

² Noam Botosh, *The agreement for compensation of local authorities for municipal tax discounts to businesses due to the Corona crisis – a budget analysis by sector*, Knesset: Research and Information Center, April 27, 2020. [Hebrew]

the Arab community will reduce the local authorities' revenues – not only during the Corona epidemic but also subsequently, when its effect on business survival becomes clear.

What has the State offered to businesses?

As a result of the Corona crisis, the State is offering guaranteed loans to small and mid-sized businesses and to this end it has budgeted NIS 35 billion. The problem is that the criteria and conditions for loan eligibility make the process difficult for Arab-owned businesses and most of their loan requests have been rejected. Businesses that have managed to meet the criteria were awarded much smaller loans than they had requested and therefore they chose not to take them. At a meeting of the Knesset Finance Committee on April 19th 2020, the Accountant General reported that 15 percent of the approximately 40 thousand requests submitted to the fund were from businesses in Arab towns, of which only 4 percent were approved. Naturally, Ali, the restaurant owner from Tamra, requested a loan in order to cover the checks he had already written. However, he was refused and was not among that 4 percent. In order to meet his obligations, Ali turned to the regular loan track at the bank; however, by the time he had put together his request his rating according to BDI—according to which the banks approve or reject loan requests from businesses both during the Corona crisis and otherwise—had fallen.

Bank policy in the Arab community during the Corona crisis

In view of the fact that the State is offering loans with a guarantee of only 15 percent of the amount of the request and that few businesses have managed to meet the criteria that have been put in place, the banks are willing to grant regular loans, but they are more cautious than during normal times. Although checks that had bounced because of insufficient coverage were not taken into account and business accounts were not frozen because of them, these checks did affect the business rating according to BDI and furthermore the banks made it more difficult for businesses to take out a loan than in normal times. Moreover, the accessibility of banking services has only been partial since many of the branches in the Arab towns were closed and the banks only provided services in certain branches. Therefore, in many cases, a business owner was unable to meet directly with the bankers at the branch where his account is located.

Arab businesses and the gray market during the Corona crisis

The financial difficulties of Arab-owned businesses during the Corona crisis led many of them to turn to the gray market. They were forced to take out loans at draconian levels of interest, to the point that it will be difficult for them to service the loans. This may lead to the involvement of violent criminal elements and from there it is only a short distance to the collapse of the business and even of the business owner's family. Indeed, some of the business owners have come into conflict with criminal elements who are involved in debt collection, after checks that were written prior to the crisis did not have sufficient coverage. These checks came into the hands of the collectors and they demanded immediate redemption and in many cases

exploited the situation to offer additional high-interest loans. This created a vicious cycle of borrowing that led to the collapse of many Arab-owned businesses.

The necessary slowdown following the promising opening of the economy in June

The opening up of businesses in June gave business owners some hope and some room to breathe. Many of the Arab business owners opened up again, although in only a partial format. In the restaurant industry, for example, there was an optimistic increase in business in June, even to above average levels in normal times, according to Ali, the restaurant owner in Tamra. However, already at the end of June there were signs of the second wave of the Corona epidemic. The Ministry of Health reinstated the restrictions on events (weddings and others) and those restrictions will obviously affect not only restaurants and event hall owners but also the suppliers of those businesses and their workers.

Lessons from the first wave of Corona

- The government is not attributing sufficient importance to the economy of the Arab community and has not taken sufficient measures to support Arab-owned businesses. For example, it should, among other things, create a loan fund with conditions that can be met by those businesses.
- The banks view businesses in the Arab community as a burden to be gotten rid of, rather than as part of the Israeli economy. It can be assumed that the banks would have closed many of the branches in Arab towns even if they had not been obligated to do so.
- The Arab local authorities as well as the Committee of Arab Mayors have not done enough in order to organize businesses as part of local or national chambers of commerce. These businesses could potentially form pressure groups to influence the various institutions. Moreover, it appears that the local authorities are afraid of a situation in which Arab business owners, who pay municipal taxes, get organized and would demand that they receive the services they deserve.
- Businesses in the Arab community are not set up to operate optimally during a crisis and therefore they will not be able to comply with the directives. As a result, many businesses were closed and some of them were forced to pay unnecessary fines.

Steps that need to be taken

As a result of the Corona crisis, the government has taken several measures to support businesses; but they have not provided any real help for small and miniature businesses in Israel and in the Arab community in particular. Therefore, the following measures are needed:

- An increase in the State-guaranteed loan budget and in the rate of the guarantee to 50 percent for small and miniature businesses.

- The extension of the current level of government assistance (which in any case is low) to workers and businesses to beyond the scheduled three months due to the perseverance of the Corona crisis and in order to boost shrinking purchasing power, even after the end of the first wave.
- To provide businesses that are closed with an exemption from municipal tax that exceeds 25 percent for the current fiscal year at least and to compensate the local authorities for any municipal tax not collected from businesses as a result.
- To create an interministerial forum that includes the Ministry of Internal Security, the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of the Economy, as well as representatives of the Committee of Arab Mayors, with the goal of preventing Arab residents from entering a viscous cycle of crime and violence as a result of taking loans in the gray market.
- The local authorities should encourage the consumption of goods and services from local businesses in the areas under their jurisdiction.
- Arab business owners need to organize, whether on the national level or in each individual Arab town.
- The local authorities need to get Arab business involved in their preparations for crises, in order that their special needs will be met.

Nuzha Allasad Alhuzail * / The “Gender Genie”: Bedouin Women between the Generations

In recent years, social and cultural processes in Bedouin society in the Negev have had an effect on the social fabric and the status of women. The first generation of Bedouin women grew up in the nomadic period and were born before the establishment of the State. They are characterized by strong self-confidence based on their social, family and personal status.

The second generation of women grew up during the urbanization period and they experienced the difficulties of transitioning from a nomadic way of life to life in a permanent settlement. They feel confused and angry about the transition process; nonetheless, they occupy key positions in Bedouin society and serve as the bridging generation between the past and the present.

The third generation of women are divided between obeying their inner voices and obeying the collective social will. The women of this generation are in the midst of a transition process that is still ongoing.

Bedouin society is flourishing and developing, as reflected in its integration within higher education and the labor market. In contrast, the advancement of women faces the barrier of traditional male domination. Although there is a small handful of men in Bedouin society who yearn for change and gender equality, they are torn between traditional masculinity – which calls for the man to be dominant – and modern masculinity.

Introduction

This article examines the effect of changes in Bedouin society in Israel on three generations of Bedouin women. These women have revealed their unique and complex world, in which each generation has chosen a different way to adjust, to express their gratification and frustration and to accommodate the complex reality of their lives. In the final section of the article, I will look at the ways in which the women in the fourth generation have dealt with the changing way of life experienced by the previous three generations of women.

The Bedouin population in Israel currently numbers about 250 thousand, accounting for about 12 percent of the total Arab population in the country. In recent years, this population has been affected by various social and cultural processes of change, which have had a far-reaching influence on its social fabric, including the status and situation of Bedouin women.

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Meir (1997) identified three main periods in the history of Bedouin society in Israel:

The nomadic period – Up until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the social structure of the Bedouin could be divided according to three levels: (a) the council – a collection of tribes that is united by social identity and led by a “sheikh of sheikhs”; (b) the tribe – several clans united under the leadership of a sheikh; (c) the clan (hamula) – several families in the same tribe with common social and economic interests; and (d) the family – a nuclear family consisting of children, parents and grandparents.

During this period, Bedouin society operated as an independent autonomy and the women enjoyed a high degree of unrestricted mobility and even a certain degree of independence, which was manifested in the ability to engage in commerce. Although the separation between men and women was not rigid, the women were married off without requiring their consent.

The period of restrictions – 1949-1966. This was the period of the military government and prior to the Bedouins’ integration in the labor market. The period can be characterized by two main processes: the Bedouin becoming refugees in their homeland and the undermining of their traditional frameworks. During this period, there was increased control and seclusion of women, and their degree of mobility was limited. The women’s participation in decision-making processes in the tribe was manifested only indirectly and behind the scenes.

The resettlement period – from the late 1960s until today and since the entry of the Bedouin into the labor market. The main changes in Bedouin society included the emergence of leisure behavior, an increase in social deviation, such as crime and drug abuse, an increase in illness, a distancing between the genders, changing symbols of status and the emergence of conflict between tradition and modernity.

The effects on Bedouin women during this period varied from generation to generation. The older women who grew up in the nomadic period lost their traditional roles; the women of the second generation attempted to operate primarily behind the scenes; and the youngest women began to rapidly integrate in the world outside the tribe.

As mentioned, the Bedouin population was originally nomadic; however, since the establishment of the State there has been a shift in the Bedouin way of life, as a result of political pressure on the Bedouins accompanied by the expropriation of land and the demolition of buildings. The State of Israel has sought to settle the Bedouin in urban settlements without providing them with any other option. The treatment of the Bedouin by the State of Israel is reflected in the ongoing process to reduce the size of their living space.

As part of the effort to settle the Bedouin in permanent settlements, seven urban villages were established in 1968. Two decades later, in 1998, the State recognized an additional eight villages, although about half of the Bedouin population still live in unrecognized settlements that do not have any infrastructure, including electricity and water. All of the Bedouin settlements in the South are located at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale and suffer from poverty, unemployment and growing violence (Allasad Alhuzail, 2014).

Bedouin women between the generations

The oldest generation in Bedouin society grew up in the nomadic period, which was characterized by control of a large amount of land and natural resources, i.e. water and pasture, as well as seclusion from the colonial settlement of the Jews in the South of the country. Furthermore, the distance from other Bedouin tribes reinforced the tradition and norms of each tribe on its own (Allasad Alhuzail, 2020; Kedar, Amara and Yiftachel, 2018). This generation felt a strong bond to the land, to customs and to their heritage. The connection to their traditional roots and customs fortified this generation and helped it to survive the period of restrictions and the accompanying pressures. This connection reinforced their resilience during the transition to permanent settlements and prepared them for the changes in their way of life.

As in the case of other native peoples around the world, the Bedouin express nostalgia for the past, for the connection to the land and the spirituality of that connection, which provided them with strength and control (Cohen, 1997). Mitchell (1998) shows how this nostalgia helps to deal with a crisis of distancing from a more familiar and happier past and to adjust to an unfamiliar and threatening present. Nostalgia is a functional emotion that helps an individual to preserve his identity in the presence of a dialectic between change and continuity. He must create a connection between the past, the present and the future, and the nostalgic return to the past makes it possible to expose what is shared between the new and the old. In other words, nostalgia helps the individual to deal efficiently with crises.

Indeed, the life stories of Bedouin women are saturated with descriptions of a past that was happier, more certain and more unifying. This perspective has helped them to adjust to the rapid changes in their lives as a result of the transition away from a familiar lifestyle. The nostalgia and longings for the past serve as a resource in the process of adjusting to change.

The tight connection to one's roots has strengthened the personal identity of Bedouin women. They felt secure in their status, in their relationships, in their homes and primarily with themselves and their way of life. The Bedouin women of the first generation told their life stories from the present to the past while expressing nostalgia for the more familiar past. Their stories present a flexible and continuous identity that has protected them. Thus, on the one hand they are open to external influences while on the other hand they maintain their original identities (Weigert and Gecas, 2005; Yehezkel-Friedlar, 1999). In this way, the Bedouin women of the first generation managed to adjust to their changing environment.

The stories of Bedouin women of the first generation are characterized by control and strength – control over their lives, control over economic resources and indirect control over political and social resources. Their connection to the home, to the land and to their customs is what provided this control and strength and it is important to mention that the men and women of this generation lived in the same social environment, without any rigid separation.

This is the generation of the grandparents, and the encounter with them as a researcher is a powerful one. A decade ago, I was a young researcher in the field who believed that the generation of the grandparents is the one that is suffering the most, both because of the traditional roles that were taken from them and because of the sweeping changes in their way of life. The initial encounter with this

generation was confusing to me. The first woman that I met was very sure of herself and her identity, and she radiated self-confidence. The story of her life was rich in content and experiences that filled her with pride. While writing about my experiences in my diary, I understood that she had undermined my opinions about not only the women of that generation, but also the women of my generation. Alone with my thoughts, I considered the questions of who I am and what I want. I experienced a period of self-reflection that interrupted my research process for a short period.

The second and transitional generation (the period of restrictions) is a confused, angry and forgotten generation but it nonetheless occupies a key position. It holds the key to progress for the younger generation, in its role as the generation bridging between the past and the present, between the old and the young, and between the children and the parents. This generation was separated from its land, a process that presented daunting challenges to the women in order to deal with the new reality forced on them, a reality that included the loss of their traditional occupations. In the early 1960s, the State of Israel concentrated the Bedouin in a limited geographic area using coercive means, a process that continues until today. As mentioned, the State is seeking to adapt the Bedouin to life in a Western country, which is how Israel views itself (Yiftachel, 2000). The Bedouin women are highly aware of these processes and choose safe routes in order to deal with them, to advance and to generate change (Abu Rabia–Qweder, 2008; Allasad Alhuzail, 2019).

My mother belonged to this generation. She held the key to progress and encouraged me to learn and to advance myself, but to keep a low profile while doing so. I felt like she was pushing me into a complex reality but was not by my side in that reality. For a while, I was angry with her because I was different from other girls of my age; I was alone in my academic journey and a stranger in my own society. I was alone in my struggle against the patriarchy and social norms since it was not acceptable at that time for girls to attend high school and all the more so university. It was not accepted to even get a driver's license – and I even had my own car. Things that were not acceptable in those days have become the norm today.

Only many years later did I understand my mother's dilemma. She was torn between the desire to "open the door" and allow me to realize my ambitions on the one hand and the desire "to keep the door locked" and thus protect me, on the other. As a member of the third generation, I only saw my mother's weakness, but after years as a researcher I came to understand the strength of the women in the second generation, which served as a bridge between the generations and as a path to progress and development.

We were only a few young women that managed to cross the bridge and Bedouin society attributed masculine traits to us. As a young woman, I found this highly disconcerting. I wanted people to see the woman in me and that they internalize the fact that a woman can realize any ambition that a man can. However, over the years I came to understand that attributing masculine traits to me and others in my generation was a manifestation of the difficulty in "digesting" the phenomenon that we represented, in accepting us, and thus allowing us to advance. In their eyes, they were enabling us to expand our boundaries but in my eyes they give in to us and accepted our ambitions.

The third generation was split between personal ambition and social ambition, between individualism and collectivism. This generation was immersed in a process of transition that is ongoing. The process has had a major effect on every facet of life and has presented Bedouin women with numerous and complex challenges.

The dialectic between preservation and change characterizes the life of this generation and is ongoing and continuous. The women of this generation have used their wisdom and power to generate a process that is progressing slowly but surely.

As a woman belonging to this split generation, I managed to blaze a new and accepted path. Many women have followed in my footsteps. I have achieved respect and admiration in Bedouin society and I was sure that my struggle and that of other women in my generation was over. This was until my young daughter presented me with a brave vision, which demonstrated to me that the code of honor and gender perceptions had changed and even become distorted.

The power of a short-sleeved shirt

My daughter was humiliated and sent home from school because she was wearing a short-sleeved shirt. The principal of the school claimed that her appearance was not respectable and that he does not agree that she will enter the school wearing that clothing. I was of the opinion that the principal had crossed the line and that his reaction was inappropriate, particularly since he is an educator. I felt that this was a gross violation of parental authority. My daughter dresses like I do and no one has ever commented that I am not dressed appropriately. I took my daughter back to school in order to get an explanation of why they thought she was improperly dressed. I was angry and upset. No one managed to provide me with an explanation; the guidance counselor said that her sleeve is meant to reach to two centimeters below the elbow. In other words, two centimeters will define what is respectable and what is not. That is how the staff of the school define what is acceptable.

This is the mask that conceals the ugly face of the patriarchy and male control. In my generation, the battle was aboveground and therefore we were able to argue and sometimes even persuade, though not to fight for our views. In contrast, the opposition to short sleeves reduces and minimalizes young women and returns them to the margins of Bedouin society. Sleeves are nothing but a short ladder to the progress and development of the young Bedouin woman. From here, things can deteriorate: it is first claimed that short sleeves are not respectable and then it will be claimed that she has chosen a mate who is not respectable, or that her ambition to study and choice of profession are not respectable.

The spark of hope among these young women should not be extinguished. Their dreams should not be shattered nor their ambitions blocked – all this on the pretext of respectability. Bedouin society is currently enjoying momentum and development, which is manifested in integration within the institutions of higher education and in the labor market; however, when it comes to women it appears that a girl's short-sleeved shirt undermines male control. Although a small group of men in Bedouin society seek change and gender equality, even they are influenced by the processes of change and are torn between traditional and modern masculinity. Educated men prefer the latter, which is manifested in full participation in childrearing and in helping and supporting their wives, as well as opposition to participation in violent

conflict between clans. But Bedouin society in general does not respect this kind of masculinity. It prefers inflexibility, violence and control of one's wife and household, namely the characteristics of traditional masculinity (Allasad Alhuzail and Segev, 2019).

In recent years, the policy toward Bedouin society can be characterized as "overindulgence", namely the expression of "cultural sensitivity" and respect for the values of a society only in internal-social matters. As a result, we are witness to situations in which murders remain unsolved and the authorities usually do not find any weapons after a shooting incident. In contrast, when such incidents occur outside Bedouin society, the murderer and his weapon are found within a short time.

Bedouin society does not have as much autonomy as in the past – its education system is not independent, its curriculum and the appointment of its principals and educational staff are determined by the Ministry of Education. Nonetheless, the State takes Bedouin culture into account and therefore tribal schools emerge. Gradually, they become the property of the tribe, including the educational staff that tries to formulate its own code of respectability and to define what is respectable and what is not, what is appropriate for a woman and what is not.

It would appear that all of this is done in the name of cultural sensitivity and this over-sensitivity has widened the gap between the genders and has created distorted gender thinking in Bedouin society. If the educational institution in which our daughters are learning is under the control of men and of the tribe then it is run according to a distorted gender perspective and is conveying patriarchal values and tribal standards. Oversensitivity to culture is nothing but acquiescence to the crushing of a new generation of women who wish to advance and be equal in all ways. This represents a threat to gender equality in Bedouin society.

A long-term policy of investment in young Bedouin women in order to integrate them within higher education and in the labor market channeled them toward occupations that would prepare them for roles that are considered to be feminine and for roles that would have the blessing of the patriarchy. In other words, this policy was carried out according to the gender contract. Currently, most young Bedouin women are studying in institutions of higher education in the South and recently in the Palestinian Authority as well. They study in fields that "satisfy" the male conscience and increase gender inequality. They primarily study the Islamic Sharia, Arab literature and in some cases foreign literature. They learn two days a week – on Fridays and the Sabbath – when the campus is empty. They study in a sterile and alienated atmosphere under the pretext of vacating the campus for "1948 Arabs" and modifying it for the needs of the young women. This results in an "academic ghetto" that does not go very far in supporting their advancement. They are not involved in Palestinian society in the West Bank and are removed from Israeli society.

Epilogue

My daughter's short-sleeved shirt aroused the gender genie at the school, after years of trying to get it back in the bottle. I did the responsible thing and decided to write about the incident and to sound a warning among administrators;³ but I did not take into account one thing, namely the reaction of her friends. My daughter shared her experience with them – they are more connected to the social media than my generation. This led to a huge wave of response from girls of her age. One of them wrote that she had been humiliated at school only because she had worn white pants and when she asked why this is not respectable, she was suspended for three days for being cheeky. Another girl wrote the following: "Your mother is a voice for all of us; she said the things that we are afraid to..."

The responses of these young girls make us—and in particular members of Bedouin society—aware of the processes being experienced by the younger generation, who are the fourth generation of Bedouin women, and lead us to wonder what they are afraid of. Why is assertiveness defined as cheek and what are the standards of acceptability and who determines them?

Schools in Bedouin society are tribal, as already mentioned. Most of the pupils are members of the tribe with which the school is associated. The principal belongs to the dominant tribe and so do most of the teaching staff. It is inconceivable that these schools will be run as the private property of the tribe or of the principal. It is inconceivable that the head of an educational institution who is meant to serve as a role model for our children will have two wives and that the principals and educators will claim to have fictitious academic degrees as a sign of status and prestige. This is not the appropriate role model for the pupils.

Although this phenomenon is not to be found in every school, this malignant growth should not be ignored since it can spread to the entire body of the Bedouin education system and will bring about its demise. Bedouin society is currently undergoing transition and such societies can either grow or go extinct. Growth will be achieved only by means of a younger generation that is involved, stands tall and is certain of itself and its abilities. It should not face any barriers or obstacles to their self-realization. Educational institutions constitute an important platform for moving ahead, and academic institutions are equally as important. An educational institution that deprives its students of their dreams and ambitions leads to disaster in society as a whole and this phenomenon must be opposed with every means available.

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³ Nuzha Allasad Alhuzail, "My daughter woke up the gender genie in Bedouin society", *ynet*, June 2, 2020. <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5740399,00.html> [Hebrew]

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