

EGYPTIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE POST-ARAB SPRING ERA

ARAP BAHARI SONRASINDA MISIR'DA KADIN HAREKETİ

Arş.Gör. Melike GÜNGÖR

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, melike.argit@gmail.com, Ankara/Türkiye

ABSTRACT

In Egypt, women's movement has been characterized through various types of activities since 1940s when independent organizations came to exist. During those years, women's agencies, demands and political expressions were shaped through substantial political incidents such as revolutions and wartimes. These extra-ordinary processes have significant impact on Egyptian gender order which points to the general policy and discourse about gendered relations. The Arab Spring has also been one of these dramatic changes which have influenced Egyptian women's movement in different ways through exclusionary discourse neglecting women's being in the public.

This study investigates how post- Arab Spring era has influenced women's movement in Egypt. Also, this study focuses on political reflections created by women as a response to gender policies and gender understanding in the society after the Arab Spring upbringings. Therefore, this study argues women's agencies shaped through and against the oppression applied by social and political constraints about women's participation into the public sphere.

Key Words: Women's Movement, Egypt, The Arab Spring, Women's Agency.

ÖZ

Mısır'da kadın hareketi 1940'larda bağımsız örgütlenmeler şeklinde ortaya çıkmaya başladığından beri çok farklı biçimlerde aktiviteler geliştirmektedir. Bu yıllar boyunca, kadınların eylemliliği, talepleri ve siyasi ifadeleri devrim ve savaş gibi çok önemli siyasi olaylar aracılığıyla biçimlenmiştir. Bu olağanüstü süreçlerin toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileriyle ilgili genel söylem ve politikaya işaret eden Mısır toplumsal cinsiyet rejimi üzerinde oldukça önemli etkileri olmuştur. Kadınların kamusal alandaki varlıklarını önemsemeyen dışlayıcı bir söylem yoluyla Mısır kadın hareketini farklı biçimlerde etkileyen Arap Baharı da bu dramatik değişimlerden biriydi.

Bu çalışma Arap Baharı sonrası dönemin Mısır'daki kadın hareketini nasıl etkilediğini araştırmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, çalışma Arap Baharı gösterilerinden sonraki dönemdeki toplumsal cinsiyet politikalarına ve anlayışlarına karşı kadınların geliştirdikleri siyasi reflekslere odaklanmaktadır. Bu anlamda, çalışma kadınların kamusal alandaki varlıklarına ilişkin toplumsal ve siyasi kısıtlamalarla uygulanan baskının kadın eylemliliklerini nasıl biçimlendirdiğini tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın Hareketi, Mısır, Arap Baharı, Kadın Eylemliliği.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on essential characteristics of Egyptian women's movement after the revolution in 2011. Egyptian women's movement has a long history and has been working with engaging to the nationalist movement since early years. But the movement has become independent especially by 1940s with civil society organizations. When we look at their organizations and matters that women focus, there are various stances some of which embodies secularism and some engages with secular, western feminism. In this sense, the main distinction seems to be formed between secularism and Islamism. But, indeed, both these stances include Islamic references in their political discourse.

This study looking for differences between pre-and post-period of the revolution in terms of women's matters to see how social discontent culminated in the revolution rebuilt the gender order. It seems significant because the gender order including social expectations from masculinity and femininity might be transformed within massive social changes like the revolution. Especially political demands for social justice, freedom and anti-

dictatorship which calls for both men and women citizens but the forms of which these are shaped in the discourse points to gendered relations. Moreover, in these periods of political disturbance the gender order is rebuilt as a part of the social construction. Political decisions and tendencies organizing gender relations take different forms according to changing social conditions. Thus, authority and social agents as an extension of the political power rebuild their main discourse to reconstruct gender order. In this way, gendered relations and social constructions are reshaped with political strategies. In light of these arguments, the study aims to evaluate gendered vision of the Egyptian revolution. In return, how these official and political strategies were responded by the women's movement is another significant point of the study. Owing to their responses and practices might show us women's agency and political tactics created against the gender order.

Consequently, the study centers upon main factors of Egyptian women's policy which were created after the revolution and against oppression reconstructed by the revolutionaries. Thus, the study firstly holds historical background of Egyptian women's movement and then examines essential matters that women's movement focused on in the post-revolution era.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Egyptian women's movement dates back a long time with well-established women's organizations and deep-rooted gender discourse. There have been various approaches in this movement considering women's social status in various ways. As a basis, this variety has been shaped through the animosity between secular approach and the Islamic one.

In early times of the movement, it consisted of women from upper class and those women's main objective was to enhance women's personal freedom (Nordwall, 2010: 2). These purposes entangled in nationalist movements which primarily followed national interests and progress. Explicitly, it was the impact of demands, ideals and goals spread with the 1919 revolution. It influenced women's social position because women's visible role in the revolution expanded in terms of their involvement in public life (Kamal, 2015: 152). Globally, it is frequently observed that women's movement integrates into the nationalist movements in independence processes, at war-times and revolutions. The revolution came as an extension of women's social status and participation into the public life. However, post 1919 was not in similar lines with these expectations about improvement of women's rights. Although women actively participated in independence movements in Egypt, women's political and legal demands were not mentioned by legal regulations in the post-revolution era. Although male nationalists accepted women's nationalist activities such as demonstrations and meetings, their legal beings were not recognized in the constitutions. Women's organizations like Women's Central Committee of the liberal WAFD party were founded, but their demands were not met in the post-revolution constitution (Kamal, 2015: 152). For that reason, Badran relates nationalism with patriarchal character (1995: 13). After 1919, women's equality with men was not brought to the political agenda. The exclusion of women from the constitution aimed to oppress independent women's demands. Yet, this exclusionary attitude resulted in unpredictable consequences in terms of the women's movement. Soon after the revolution, activist women agreed on the necessity for women's organizations to gather female activists who came together around popular nationalist political views in the course of the revolution. Therefore, in 1923 Egyptian Women's Union (Al-Itihad Al-Nisae'i Al-Misri) was founded as a response to the new regime's neglect of women's social improvements (Kamal, 2015: 153). Although women organized a committee in this party, WAFD party still seemed unconcerned about women's demands. As a result, women decided to change the form of their organization and to organize as an association rather than being a part of a political party (Kamal, 2015: 153). The Egyptian Women's Union focused on women's political rights, women's status in the civic law, education and women's employment. Their demands included nationalist notions but also achieved to associate these demands with feminism (Al-Ali, 2002: 6). Fundamentally, Egyptian feminists advocated women's demands to be voiced in the parliament rather than women's participation into the parliament. Besides, women's activities aimed at informing people and drawing attention to women's problem. With this purpose, a variety of women's journals were published in this process. Mostly, these journals involved in social issues such as education, the role of the family, women's employment and their rights (Al-Ali, 2002: 6). As well as journals, women began to work actively in charity organizations which aimed to improve women's participation into public and political life (Mahmood, 2005: 69). Similar vision on charity-oriented activities maintained during 1940s but by the end of 1940s this political approach was accompanied by meetings about rising feminist consciousness and political protest (Al-Ali, 2002: 7). Indeed, within this process, a various of demands about women's position emerged as pro-communist women, the welfare-oriented and also Islamist-oriented Muslim women (Al-Ali, 2002: 7). Al-Ali claims that Egyptian women's movement came of age during the period from 1945 to 1960 (Al-Ali, 2002: 6). It might be the result of diversifying ideological tendencies of women. Thus,

women's organizations began to be shaped in terms of women's different political views which feminism coupled with.

The 1956 constitution was crucial turning point for feminist women because it declared that all Egyptians were equal regardless of gender (Hatem, 1992: 232). Within the 1956 Constitution women were granted for their political rights, whereby Article 31 stated: 'Egyptians shall be equal before the law in public rights and duties, with no discrimination among them therein on the grounds of sex, origin, language, religion or creed' (Kamal, 2015: 154). The National Charter declared that the recognition of gender equality in the state sector meant that men and women were regarded as equal working partners. Moreover, the education system was reformed to increase people's participation in education both for primary and secondary education, which particularly affected women's educational status positively (Ahmed, 1992: 209-210). In light of these improvements, Hatem defines the process 1950s and 1960s as state feminism which is a historical strategy used under specific conditions. Mostly, it appears with the growth of both the state sector and the welfare states because mainly it was based on labor and skills of middle-class and working class women (Hatem, 1992: 232). At the same time, some women activists drew attention to women's legal rights in terms of the transformation of social construction and values about gender roles. Their opinions frequently pointed to unequal positions of men and women at homes. Furthermore, expectations from men and women about masculinity and femininity would be reproduced by legal regulations which left gender equality in the private sphere unchallenged. Therefore, notwithstanding the progressive framework, women's positions were accommodated with more conservative perspective about family and the political system (Hatem, 1992: 232). In addition, Bier claims that state feminism under the Nasser ruling led to improvements paradoxically. On the one hand these regulations partially recognized women's citizenship. On the other hand, those kept women's various claims under the state control (2011: 110). There was profound impact of the state policy on political discourse and organizational types of women that its monopoly over the feminist realm in Egypt maintained through 1970s and 1980s (Kamal, 2015: 154).

State feminism and state's oppression on women's movement changed by 1970s and 80s due to the changing tasks of the state. Under Sadat's ruling, the state drew back from the policies of social equality and equal opportunity towards decentralizing economic decisions and promoting private enterprises (Al-Ali, 2002: 7). It was under Sadat ruling that the Personal Status Law was reformed in favour of women's rights (Al-Ali, 2002: 8).

On account of women's movement, in 1981 Egypt signed The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Besides, Mubarak's reforms provided non-governmental organizations including women's associations and feminist organizations free and independent area. When these two historical developments are considered together, non-governmental organizations gained access to international platforms (Kamal, 2015: 154). Organizations' joining into the international fora seems crucial as, by owing to this, they could discuss, criticize or analyze state's policies on gender equality in different political and social areas. It would led international cooperation with different organizations and so women could receive solution recommendations from various resources. That is why Kamal defines the period from 1970s to 1980s as the quest for Western acknowledgement in terms of women's movement. But in this period, there was a lack of holistic and well-planned legal regulation as a road map for gender equality. In addition, increasing economic pressures derived from the state's withdraw from social policies burden people. As a result of these economic situations, women were generally encouraged to return domesticity (Al-Ali, 2002: 8). Thus, we could claim that women were not supported by social policies based on gender equality so women's attachment to the domestic sphere appeared as an only way to tolerate financial difficulties. Along similar lines, Hatem claims that in these conditions women generally linked to the domestic sphere with the conservative discourses on their roles (1992: 232). Women's movement mainly focused on fighting for gender equality in the Personal Status Law and on taboo issues such as contraception and clitoridectomy (Ahmed, 1992: 214). The struggle for women's rights and women's being in the public sphere became totally visible in the argument about Personal Status Law. In this period, women's rights, right to educate, participation into the public life and women's employment was justified with nationalism and modernity. But women's rights in the private sphere were neglected and these were also considered apart from women's legitimate struggle for women's rights (Al-Ali, 2002: 11).

By 1990s, the term of 'Islamic feminism' emerged in the women's political discourse. The term of Islamic feminism appeared in 1980s-90s and most of authors used the term with a reference to historical difference in terms of women's movement. Mainly, this argument could be considered as a debate between the two ends of a continuum of the theoretical approach which could be followed differences between Margot Badran and

Asma Barlas. While Badran promotes Islamic feminism as an analytical construct, Asma Barlas opposed Badran's characterization of the concept (Seedat, 2013: 26). In Barlas' vision, the term Islamic feminism need to be defined as "a discourse of gender equality and social justice that derives its understanding and mandate from the Quran and seeks the practice of rights and justice for all human beings in the totality of their existence across the public-private continuum" (Barlas, 2004: 1). Besides, as a discursive transformation in terms of women's movement in Egypt, the crucial package of reforms was enacted in 2000, which allows women leave unwanted marriages in case of giving up their bride price (it can be a gift of money). These legal achievements were carried out both with the President Mubarak's support and struggles of women's activities (Zuhur, 2014: 4).

In light of these information and historical improvements in the way of Egyptian women's movement, post-revolution period led paradigmatic shift in the women's political discourse. The following section focuses on the main notions which dominated the Egyptian women's movement's political discourse.

3. THE POST-REVOLUTION ERA IN EGYPT: HOW THINGS CHANGED FOR WOMEN AFTER 2011?

All of the world had been witnessed how Egyptian people's claim their demands on 'bread, freedom and justice' on the Tahrir Square in January 2011. Men and women together struggled for these demands especially for 18 days. After this period, things were changed for women and this had impacts on the forms of women's policy. In 2010 and 2011, transformative uprisings blew up across the North Africa and Middle East. Similar political upheaval began on 25th January 2011 in Egypt. Millions of Egyptians went out on the streets to demand the downfall of the regime with shouting the slogan "*al-Sha'b Yureed Isqatal-Nizam*" (*The People Want the Downfall of the Regime*) (Mostafa, 2015: 120). Their demands are conceptualized in three groups: to end to Mubarak's government, to end corruption especially police repression and brutality, to repair economic problems. Unrest maintained until Mubarak's departure from government was announced on 11 February 2011 and then a military council took over government (Zuhur, 2012: 6). But, after this announcement, different claims on new government appeared which led to the separation of groups of people on the streets. Yet, this separation primarily had an impact on women's being in the public. Because, while in first days of the uprisings women were on the streets as well as men, after 18 days violence of mass against women began. Calls for women to return their homes made and explicitly they were excluded from this political process. Violence against women maintained after the uprising and turned into the masculine confrontation against women's political activities and women's demands on legal rights were not met. To confront these problems and as a result of political developments, a new type of feminism arised in Egypt. In other words, three initial concerns came to the fore in women's agenda: violence against women, discredit of women's legal status and Islamic feminism.

3.1. Violence Against Women

Following the revolution in Egypt in 2011, women, especially demonstrators participated in street protests faced with discrimination and pressure. Also during protests, women were confronted with bullying and sexual harassments both of male protestors and officers'. These increasing events of violence became visible with Samira Ibrahim who was tortured in detention. Ibrahim was young student and arrested during Egyptian uprisings by officers. When she was arrested, Samira Ibrahim's body was searched without clothes and numerous soldiers and officers watched her naked body (Hafez, 2014: 174). With this, Ibrahim was humiliated through her body and nakedness. Actually this illegal treatment shows the main vision of the masculine discourse which test and categorize women whether acting proper or improper to the Egyptian tradition and dignity. Because Samira was arrested with the officer's claim that she was arrested in a house of prostitution (Hafez, 2014: 173). This claim is a kind of blame and labelling women as being inappropriate in terms of collective honour and unity. For this reason, Samira and her body turned into a thing which seemed dangerous to the traditional perception of honour. The virginity test might be regarded as the symbol of this vision. Samira was forced to take the virginity test when she was in custody because she was unmarried. Along with Samira, numerous women were to take this virginity test (Hafez, 2014: 173). It might be considered as the heaviest kind of interference into the physical beings of women. Indeed, sexual harassments, virginity tests, humiliation of women by means of forced nakedness appeared as a way of discrediting women that the Egyptian Supreme Council of the Armed Forces tried to do (Ennaji, 2016: 105). In addition to bullying and abuse of women, marginalization of women protestors was used to legitimate these illegal affairs. Similar vision could be observed in the Muslim Brotherhood's expression that women shouldn't participate in demonstrations because it was more dignified to let their husbands and brothers demonstrate for them (Eltahawy, 2012). It is not an

unusual opinion about women because right after the protests the popular opinion disregarding women's beings in public protests emerged.

Wahba evaluates violation against women in the context of gender order, when she analyses the revolution in Egypt. To this, the revolution engendered deviation in the gendered relations as a result of collective actions of men and women mobilized against the government. Along similar lines, Hania Sholkamy asserts that the revolution emerged as a disengagement from the status quo for 18 days and the protests had not been gendered until 18 days, that was 'gender neutral' (Wahba, 2016: 67). Likewise, violence appeared as a way to rebuild the gender order and reassert the masculine domination of the system, as happened in Egypt (Wahba, 2016: 71). After Samira Ibrahim filed a lawsuit against the military police for taking her virginity tests, it was revealed that the 'virginity test' was not uncommon practice for the military police. Indeed, a number of protestors expressed that they had been tortured, beaten and electrocuted. Within the public announcement of Samira Ibrahim about illegal practices in the custody, these occasions drew people attention (Morsy, 2014: 219). In this sense, Samira Ibrahim became the symbol of state violence against women.

Although numerous sexual assaults, brutal beatings by army and police officer and also sexual violence and gang rapes were reported from 2011 to 2015, these reports remained inconclusive (Hassan, 2015: 3). Still, sexual violence against women in the public space remains as a serious problem in Egypt. But, as contrary to the period following the uprisings, both number and degree of violence seems to be decreased because of the absence of mass demonstrations. However, similar events were still happened in highly crowded places or in front of movie theatres during feasts and Islamic eids (Hassan, 2015: 3-4). To tackle this serious problem, the need for a national step was accepted and a national strategy to combat violence against women has been announced on 7th May 2015. Besides, the Penal Code was reformed to include the definition of the sexual harassment notwithstanding deficiency of its content and narrowness of the definition (Hassan, 2015: 4). But still, violation is a serious problem in Egypt and so women's movement maintains to fight against it.

3.2. Backlash of Women's Legal Status

While in the early period of uprisings in Egypt women attended to protests with strong hope to make political changes on behalf of women's social status. Yet, the post-revolution era dominated by the violence against women had disappointing results for women's legal status. Although the protests achieved to overthrow the dictator and promoted some legal changes, women's legal status and achievements were the primary factors to be discarded in some tough circumstances. To clarify, a quota for women's political representation removed and the number of female MPs maintained in the low degree. Also, the statement of the Muslim Brotherhood might be effective on the lack of women's political participation. Because, the Muslim Brotherhood whose Freedom and Justice Party dominated the parliament asserted that women cannot be a president in Egypt. For this reason, women made up only 2% of the post-revolution parliament (Ennaji, 2016: 105). Indeed, the backlash against women's social status began after the revolution with the lack of interest of National Council for Women (NCW) which is known as the National Women Machinery of Egypt. This council which was established by Suzanne Mubarek, the former first lady, didn't present a strategy for women and had no voice after the revolution (Morsy, 2014: 216). On the other side, Muslim Brotherhood explicitly showed discontent about women's activities. To explain, on the official websites of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), expressed their opposition against the NCW and made strong calls to abolish this council. Furthermore, they supported 'family agenda' rather than women's right agenda and this is the exact reason for them to oppose the NCW (Morsy, 2014: 216).

The 2012 constitution clearly reflected the exclusion of a vast majority of Egyptians especially of women. Explicitly women's demands were ignored in the constitution but also women were regarded as proper to Muslim Brotherhood's neoliberal values about the gender order (Kamal, 2015: 156). Besides, the Islamist rhetoric about women's rights remained in the constitution as well as previous expressions in constitutions (McLarney, 2016: 111). This language and the statement of the Muslim Brotherhood about women's presidency might have been so effective that the question whether higher employment positions for women are proper or not to Islam appeared as a serious matter in Egypt. Neither the 2012 nor the 2014 constitution made clear statement about women's higher positions. Indeed, while relevant article in 2012 constitution mentions women could be take part in higher positions in the state, at the end of the article it emphasized the need for securing motherhood, childhood, pregnant women and aging women (Khattab, 2016: 116). In this sense, on the one hand the constitution supported women's employment and assignment of women in the high positions; on the other hand, it emphasized the significance of women's social roles as being mothers and children's childhood. Actually, 2012 constitution drew attention for being based upon the family-oriented legal regulations rather than to centre upon individuals. It might be seen as the religion's strong effect on social

expectations attached to masculinity and femininity. Thus, women were recognized merely through their domestic tasks within “a family founded on religion, morality and patriotism” (Khattab, 2016: 135). Also, the formal language in the constitution focused on preserving the authentic character of the Egyptian family and on protection of the national moral values (Khattab, 2016: 135). In this context, motherhood and mothers caring of children have been frequently used notions as a part of gender discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition to the recognition of women through domestic roles and norms, women’s representation remained at low rates in numerous public institutions because of discouraging expression about women’s political status. Indeed, the Experts Committee included no women among its members, also there were only five women (10% of the committee) in the Constitutional Committee. Yet, on the other hand, demands of the women’s movement were satisfied by means of chairs reserved for women: Chair of the National Council for Women, Chair of the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood (Kamal, 2015: 158).

After the expelling of the Islamist, the new decisions were announced in July 2013 with suspension and amendment of the 2012 constitution. The 2013 constitutional draft is more favourable to women’s rights than the 2012 Constitution. While the 2012 constitution mentioned women’s rights in the family saying that the state will endeavour to strike a balance between women’s family duties and their work in society; but in 2013 constitution women was recognized as individuals and persons, with rights distinct from their families (Zuhur, 2014: 9) But, still, women’s recognition in the constitution has not been changed dramatically although this process was influenced by a strong liberal vision (Khattab, 2016: 135). Women remained as the only group which have had restricted rights. So, it might be regarded as the continued conflictual approach based on the tension between Islam and gender equality (Khattab, 2016: 135). In this sense, the Sharia had the major role in determining and evaluating women’s legal position. Thus, enhancement about women’s legal positions have been made tentatively and unclearly with the conservative bindings on women.

3.3. Diversified Women’s Agencies

Islamic feminism emerged by 1990s as a new form of reflecting women’s demands with reference to Islamic resources. This vision asserts that Islamic rules and traditions recognize gender equality and value women’s social positions as contrary to the widespread Western idea. Islamic feminism is politically radical because of including concepts such as social justice, gender equality and freedom. In this sense, it needs to be conceptualized as a political response to the prevailing dichotomy between gender equality and Islam. In this sense, Islamic feminism discusses Muslim issues and apply those to feminist arguments and reread the Islamic text with the impact of this vision (Kynsilehto, 2008: 9).

This political claim appeared in Egypt when some of the rising groups of secular and religious women opposed to the opinion that feminism has a particular style and a project. This means that those women asserted there could be different types of feminism as contrast to modernist conceptualization of feminism (Badran, 2001: 43). Badran also mentions that the domination of secular feminism in Egypt but with reference to Islamic argumentations (Badran, 2001: 50). In this sense, there have been always Islamic references in the feminist groups of Egypt but the distinction between Islamic and secular gradually became prevalent in the movement. Diversely, Islamic feminism, the new kind of feminism, appeared with secular demands in line with Islamic justifications. Therefore, the approach was formed to re-read Islamic resources in light of the concept of gender equality. Quran and hadiths were essential tools that Islamic feminism uses to prove gender equality embedded in Islamic thought.

When it comes to the case of Egypt, Badran regarded Islamic feminism as a new kind of feminism which based on the youth-led revolution and politically calls for freedom and social justice. In this sense, although they don’t use the term feminism, their main political notions such as equality, freedom and justice accommodate with feminist goals and discourse (Wahba, 2016: 67). Moreover, Badran considered Islamic feminism as the embedded motive of the revolution in 2011.

As it is observed in the revolution process, women activists looked for different ways of being agents in line with their political demands. Confrontation of these political efforts frequently emphasize women’s traditional roles and national norms to be protected. Similarly, through media and constitutional articles women’s traditional roles have been promoted and their beings have been strictly attached to the traditional family. In other terms, this vision regarded women playing specific and crucial roles within the nation (El Nossery, 2016: 143). Thus, improper women to this perspective were marginalized as we can see in the Egypt post-revolution case. It is the exact way to legitimize violence against women and women’s exclusion from the dominant political discourse. In light of these arguments, Islamic feminism appeared as a way of demanding gender equality without keeping Islamic approach out of their stance. Muslim women activists came up with the idea

that patriarchal laws rooted in state Sharia law were Islamically unjust (Tonnessen, 2014: 4). Because just as Arab spring blew up as a resistance to oppressive norms imposed by the regime, Islamic feminism similarly emerged as resistance to Islamic and patriarchal norms. Moreover, firstly the Egyptian revolution focused on the defying patriarchal norms and secondly it was advanced by the rupture in the gender order (Wahba, 2016: 67).

In addition, the west might be influential on how feminism shaped in Egypt post-revolution era. The term of feminism has been frequently criticized for being western rooted concept and so improper to the eastern culture. According to this opinion, it could foster the destruction of national values and social construction (Kamal, 2015: 21-24). When it comes to the Egyptian revolution, the resistance against colonialism was one of the main motives fuelled political discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood. After revolution *hijab* (headscarf) re-emerged with its old and new meanings. While the western perspective considers headscarf as the symbol of Islamic oppression upon women, the liberal discourse which based on social justice and is associated with the revolution brought the hijab back again. Thus, Ahmed asserts that contrary to western perception of headscarf, women don't wear it in this way and also they might engage with headscarf in various ways in their lives (Ahmed, 2016: 212). In this sense, women's being- as well as men- in Egypt uprisings corresponded to the opposition against the western hegemony on notions such as freedom, justice and gender equality. Indeed, their political suggestions, practices demonstrate distinctive tendency towards discussions on gender referring to both Islamic and feminist persuasions.

The similar tendency behind the re-emerging hijab could be found in the content of Islamic feminism. Concepts, images and practices seemed to be outreached historical developments, but they could be regenerated in different, complex forms. Moreover, different forms of agency are created in this way. We could observe that numerous women appeared in debates and campaigns of Morsy presidency with western clothes but also covering their heads (El-Marsafy, 2014: 40). Thus, it is required to consider headscarf both with its old and new meanings, actually with its changing content. That appears as creation of different ways to express their demands and to reflect their opinions. Women's graffiti movement is one of these ways. Although making graffiti to protests political decisions and strategies has been wide-spread for years, women's participation into this has been relatively new and weak. Shortly after the Egyptian revolution, women went out streets to draw their protests, frustrations, dreams and demands, as well as men street artists. Also, women artists wanted to draw their demands and opinions against social expectations about women (El Nossery, 2016: 148). These were used for campaigns protesting violence against women. The artist, Hend Kheera made stencil campaigns against sexual harassment that says "Don't touch or the castration awaits you!". Her slogan drew enormous attention that some criticized this because of being shocking and provocative (El Nossery, 2016: 149). The 'Women on Walls', a graffiti artists movement, organized another effective protests with their drawings. These artists women painted walls all over Cairo to express women's problems in their lives in Egypt. In a short time, the movement expanded and numerous artists and women who are not artists draw their demands or images about their problems such as sexual harassments, legal rights and domestic roles (El Nossery, 2016: 151). With these paintings and graffiti, they could achieve to attract people's attention and create a collective action for women to reflect their social problems arose from being women in Egypt. Indeed, as Mahmood asserts, instead of considering agency as a resistance to the authority, it is meaningful to think of agency as reflections of inner emotions, dreams and demands but also as a way of creating these inner factors (Mahmood, 2005: 157) This means that collective action could make changes with creating opinions, motivations and emotions. It is the self-cultivation that makes inner expression to fit in behaviours observed from outside. This process might take place in various, creative and shocking forms thus this kind of definition of 'agency' inherently emerges as a radical response to the hegemony of singular meanings attributed to concepts. In this context, this term of agency allows us to understand and evaluate different forms of political beings and practices.

4. CONCLUSION

Egyptian women's movement dates back to old times which experienced more than one revolution. These have been significant experiences because revolutionary processes had serious impacts on women's movement. While women's demands are promoted in these chaotic, challenging times with diminishing these blazing times women are generally forced to return their homes and their housework. Thus, women's participation in the public and political sphere acts back and forth in terms of legal and political achievements. However, these experiments and oppressions on women's movement open new roads for women in the long term.

After the revolution, indeed during the last days of protests, conservative approach to women's participation into the public predominated gender equality and numerous attacks against women were observed. But these practices based on violence by officers and civil men did not come to an end with lasting protestors. These

attacks maintained after the revolution that led to women's collective protests in various forms due to the increasing sexual harassments, bullying and abuses Egyptian women organized protests, meetings and debates. In addition, Ibrahim's law suit against officers for 'virginity tests' prompted massive people to reflect their discontent about attacks against women. In this sense, a woman's expressions of their frustration or talking about her frustration, humiliation achieved to create awareness about violence against women. Although attackers or rapists were not put on trial, increasing reaction would force state officers to attempt such things humiliating women.

From the women's angle, women's movement in Egypt seems to strengthen with diversifying and increasing oppression upon women. Because male-dominant system maintains to ignore women's achievements, struggle and experiences. Thus, women activists try to find out different ways of expressing their demands. In this sense, as long as patriarchal oppression intensifies women's agency would response in more creative and unique ways. In Egypt, although post-revolution era excluded women from the political sphere and link them to the domestic sphere with conservative and Islamic references women created new political ways to extend their political areas. In this sense, women could achieve to develop their social positions which let them to express their political opinions and activities as well as varying places and tools that they used for reflecting their stances.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, L. (1992). *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots to a Modern Debate*. Yale University Press. USA.
- Al-Ali, N.S. (2002). "The Women's Movement in Egypt with Selected References to Turkey". UN: Civil Society and Social Movements Programme Paper (5).
- Badran, M. (1995). *Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt*. Princeton University Press. New Jersey, USA.
- Badran, M. (2001). "Locating feminisms: The collapse of secular and religious discourses in the Mashriq", *Agenda*, 16 (50): 41-57.
- Badran, M. (2014, January 12). *The Qur'an, Sexual Equality and Feminism*, Speech presented in University of Toronto, Toronto.
- Badran, M. (2005). "Between Secular and Islamic Feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond", *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 1 (1): 6-28.
- Bier, L. (2011). *Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity and the State in Nasser's Egypt*. Stanford University Press. California, USA.
- El Nossery, N. (2016). "Women, Art and Revolution in the Streets of Egypt". (Eds. F.Sadiqi), *Women's Movements in Post- "Arab Spring" North Africa*, pp.143-158, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, USA.
- El-Marsafy, H. (2014). "Islamic Feminist Discourse in the Eyes of Egyptian Women: A Fieldwork Study", *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies*, 2 (4): 27-50.
- Eltahawy, M. (2012, April 23). "Why do they hate us?", *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/04/23/why-do-they-hate-us/>.
- Ennaji, M. (2016). "About North African Women's Rights after the Arab Spring". (Eds. F.Sadiqi), *Women's Movements in Post- "Arab Spring" North Africa*, pp.97-108, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, USA.
- Hafez, S. (2014). "The Revolution shall not pass through women's bodies: Egypt, uprising and gender politics", *The Journal of North African Studies*, 19 (2): 172-185.
- Hassan, M. (2015). "Women's Rights in the Aftermath of Egypt's Revolution", *EU Spring: Working Paper*, 2015 (5).
- Hatem, M.F. (1992). "Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24 (2): 231-251.
- Kamal, H. (2015). "Inserting women's rights in the Egyptian constitution: personal reflections", *Journal for Cultural Research*, 19 (2): 150-161.

- Khattab, M. (2016). "The Struggle of Egyptian Women for Equal Rights Continues: Two Steps Forward, One Step Backward". (Eds. F.Sadiqi), Women's Movements in Post- "Arab Spring" North Africa, pp.127-142, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, USA.
- Kynsilehto, A. (2008). "Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives. Introductory Notes". (Eds. A. Kynsilehto, Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives, pp.9-14, University of Tampere, Finland.
- Mahmood, S. (2005). The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, USA.
- McLarney, E. (2016). "Women's Rights and Equality: Egyptian Constitutional Law" (Eds. F.Sadiqi), Women's Movements in Post- "Arab Spring" North Africa, pp.109-126, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, USA.
- Morsy, M. (2014). "Egyptian women and the 25th of January Revolution: presence and absence", The Journal of North African Studies, 19 (2): 211-229.
- Mostafa, D.S. (2015). "Introduction: Egyptian women, revolution and protest culture", Journal for Cultural Research, 19 (2): 118-129.
- Nordwall, K. (2010, January 04). "Egyptian Feminism: The Effects of the State, Popular Trends and Islamism on the Women's Movement in Egypt", Web. http://www2.coloradocollege.edu/academics/FYE/essays/Kristina_Nordwall.pdf.
- Seedat, F. (2013). "Islam, Feminism and Islamic Feminism: Between Inadequacy and Inevitability", Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 29 (2): 25-45.
- Tonnessen, L. (2014). "Islamic Feminism". Working Paper: 1, Ahvad University, Sudan.
- Wahba, D. (2016). "Gendering the Egyptian Revolution". (Eds. F.Sadiqi), Women's Movements in Post- "Arab Spring" North Africa, pp.61-76, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, USA.
- Zuhur, S. (2014). "Women's Quest for Equality in Post-Revolutionary Egypt". (Eds. C. Derichs and D.Fennert), Women's Movement and Countermovements: The Quest for Gender Equality in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, pp.27-54, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK.