

WOMEN'S NGOs AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE STATE IN
EGYPT

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BERİL KARAOĞLAN

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Prof. Dr. Sencer Ayata
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Recep Boztemur
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Prof. Dr. Bahattin Akşit
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Prof. Dr. Bahattin Akşit (METU,SOC) _____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Recep Boztemur(METU, HIS) _____
Assist. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Şen (METU,SOC) _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last name : Beril Karaođlan

Signature :

ABSTRACT

WOMEN'S NGOs AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE STATE IN EGYPT

Karaođlan, Beril

M.S., Department of Middle East Studies

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Bahattin Akřit

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This thesis is designed to analyze the relations between the Egyptian women's NGOs and the state in Contemporary Egypt through the interviews conducted with members and administrators of eleven selected women's NGOs based in Cairo. The main aim is to show how these NGOs with different aims and different working areas build their relations with the state, what kind of problems they face and how they cope with them as well as, if there are any, elaborate the relation patterns between the state and different women's NGOs in different fields.

The sample of the research consists of twenty-seven women, members and administrators, from eleven women's organizations based in Cairo. The women's organizations that constitute the subject of this research study were selected out of the leading advocacy, research, charity and development NGOs in Cairo. Within this framework, the thesis is mainly based on the qualitative data of the in-depth interviews and the interpretations of the responses given by the interviewees.

On the other hand, in order to better analyze and understand existing relations between the state and women's organizations in contemporary Egypt, women's activism and NGOs and their shifting relations with the state will be examined historically as well.

Key Words: Women's activism, women's NGOs, state, National Council for Women

ÖZ

MISIR'DAKİ KADIN NGO'LARI VE DEVLETLE OLAN İLİŞKİLERİ

Karaođlan, Beril

Yüksek Lisans, Ortadođu Arařtırmaları Bölümü

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Bu tez çağdař Mısır'daki kadın NGO'ları ve devlet arasındaki ilişkileri Kahire merkezli onbir kadın NGO'sunun üye ve yöneticileri ile yapılan görüşmeler çerçevesinde analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Amaç, farklı amaçları ve çalışma alanları olan bu NGO'ların devletle kurdukları ilişkileri, ne tür problemler yaşadıklarını ve bunları nasıl çözdüklerini göstermek olduđu kadar, eđer varsa, farklı alanlarda çalışan farklı kadın NGO'larının devletle kurdukları ilişkilerin farklılıklarını da ortaya koymaktır.

Bu araştırmanın örneklemini Kahire merkezli on bir kadın organizasyonunun yirmi yedi üye ve yöneticisi oluşturmaktadır. Bu araştırma çalışmasının konusunu oluşturan kadın organizasyonları kadın hakları savunuculuđu, araştırma, yardım ve kalkınma alanlarında Kahire'nin önde gelenleri arasından seçilmiştir. Bu çerçevede, bu tez temel olarak derinlemesine görüşmelerden elde edilen kalitatif verilere ve görüşme yapılan kişilerin verdiđi cevapların yorumlanmasına dayanmaktadır.

Öte yandan, çağdař Mısır'daki kadın organizasyonları ve devlet arasındaki ilişkiyi daha iyi analiz edebilmek ve anlayabilmek için, kadın

aktivizmi ve NGO'ları ve bunların devletle olan deęişken ilişkileri tarihsel süreç içerisinde de incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın Hareketi, Kadın NGO'ları, devlet, Mısır Ulusal Kadın Konseyi

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ACRONYMS

AAW	: Alliance for Arab Women
ADEW	: Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women
AWSA	: Arab Women's Solidarity Association
CEWLA	: Center for Egyptian Women Legal Aid
CSOs	: Civil Society Organizations
DNU	: Daughter of the Nile Union
ECWR	: Egyptian Center for Women's Rights
EFU	: Egyptian Feminist Union
MOSA	: Ministry of Social Affairs
NCW	: National Council for Women
NFP	: National Feminist Party
NFU	: National Feminist Union
NGO	: Non-governmental Organization
NMC	: New Marriage Contract
NWF	: New Woman Foundation
PSL	: Personal Status Law
WMF	: Women and Memory Forum
WWCC	: Wafdist Women's Central Committee
YCWA	: Young Christian Women Association

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Problem and Outline of the Thesis

The purpose of the present thesis is to analyze the relations between the Egyptian women's NGOs and their relations with the state through the interviews conducted with members and administrators of eleven selected women's NGOs based in Cairo.

Throughout the present study, I will try to document the history of Egyptian women's activism and their positions vis-à-vis the shifting policies of the Egyptian state as well as explore the state's policies towards them in different political contexts. In order to better analyze and understand the existing situation, it is important to examine the Egyptian women's activism and women's organizations that have taken different positions and gone under significant changes under different regimes, which have been associated with the leaders and their wives, in a historical manner. In this respect, I will try to explore the major shifts in their positions vis-à-vis the Egyptian state with reference to regime changes, the major contestation and negotiation areas, the turning points reflecting the continuity and breaks in this relationship, and the political situations that have characterized it throughout its history. Furthermore, based on the in-depth interviews carried out, I will explore how selected women's NGOs build their relations with the state, what kind of problems they face and how they cope with them in order to reveal the current nature of the relations between the Egyptian women's

NGOs and the Egyptian state. Besides, analysis of the interviews is aimed to shed light on the factors that shape this relationship currently.

Analyzing the relations between women's organizations and the state is important in that the state is itself "a site of struggle" and also an entity that can offer "opportunity spaces" for the women's movement (Waylen, 1998: 15). Women's groups cannot be analyzed outside of the structures that constrain them and without analyzing the institutions and structures that can shape gender relations and women's activities in specific contexts (Waylen, 1998: 1-2). In that sense, the state has the power to strengthen the existing gender relations as well as the potential to unsettle the existing gender order through reforms and new regulations (Connell in Al-Ali, 1990: 529-531). Therefore, it can be said that women's organizations work both against and through the state, depending on the specific nature of the state and its policies (Al-Ali, 2000: 54). Thus, it is important to analyze women's organizations with reference to the state and its shifting policies, and historical transformations in particular contexts. As Kandiyoti puts it (1991: 2-3):

The ways in which women are represented in political discourse, the degree of formal emancipation they are able to achieve, the modalities of their participation in economic life and the nature of the social movements through which they are able to articulate their gender interests are intimately linked to state-building processes and are responsive to their transformations.

Within this framework, it can be said that as everywhere else, the position and status of women in Egypt are determined by the "dialectical" relationship of the state policies and the pressure exerted by the women's groups to increase their opportunities, in addition to other factors (El-Baz, 1997: 148). The nature of this relationship depends on different contexts. Historically, the Egyptian state has been an active actor in shaping gender through its policies and legal provisions and

offers resources to the women's organizations as well as it poses a threat (Al-Ali, 2000: 84).

The woman question has been a contested domain and a negotiation and confrontation area between the state, women activists and the Islamists in Egypt throughout its history (Badran, 1991: 201).¹ On the other hand, women's situation and the shifting relationship between women's organizations and the Egyptian state have gone under significant changes in the modern nation-building period, and after independence, under Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak regimes (Al-Ali, 2000: 218). As Al-Ali (2000: 55) states it:

The fractured nature of the Egyptian post-colonial state, its changing policies under different regimes, its internal divisions and its links to international constituencies account for women activists' shifting relations to the state. Women are affected in different ways: They are recipients of state policies (which could be either supportive or oppressive) and also try to influence state policies. In this process of mobilization at the level of the state, women activists become part of Egypt's civil society.

Lately, especially since the 1990s, women's organizations have mushroomed in Egypt as elsewhere due to several reasons. In addition to the charity-oriented women's organizations, which have historical roots in Egypt, there have emerged a number of organizations working in the field of advocacy, research and development. On the other hand, the relations between the women's NGOs and the state in Egypt have been affected by the growing concern and interest in the women's issues and women's organizing efforts throughout the world as well as the pressure exerted by the international community. Due to the international developments and the pressure, the Egyptian state has taken steps towards gender equality through the amendments made to the Personal

¹ However, the scope of this thesis is restricted to the relationship between the Egyptian state and women's NGOs as the two main actors in negotiating the change.

Status Law and mechanisms established such as National Council for Women, which has a broad mandate.

Within this framework, it is important to analyze the relationship between the state and the Egyptian women's NGOs in a historical manner. Therefore, I think it is necessary to look at the political and historical developments, as well as the routes this relationship has taken throughout its history, in order to better analyze the current nature of the relationship.

For the reasons I explained above, I will start my analysis by briefly documenting the history of Egyptian women's movement and its dialectic relationship with the state as well as the shifting state policies under different regimes.

In the second chapter, first of all, I will examine the historical context that gave way to the emergence of the first women activists and women's organizations in Egypt starting from the early reform attempts of the nineteenth century. Then I will take up the relations between the state and women's NGOs under different regimes in different sections; the Formal Independence Period, and then, Nasser and Sadat Regimes. In this chapter, I will focus on the political situation, the laws regulating civil society and the relations of women's organizations with the state and how this relationship was affected by different state policies under different political regimes in this context.

I will examine the Mubarak period in the third chapter, given the significance of the period as the one that still continues to exist. To better analyze the re-emergence and flourishing of women's organizations after the 1980s, I will examine this period under three sections. In this chapter, I will start with the analysis of the political situation and civil society in Egypt under Mubarak and move on to explaining the reasons

that gave way to the re-emergence of women's activism and women's NGOs in Egypt starting from the 1980s to the beginning of 2000s. The relationship between them and the state, the factors determining it and challenges and opportunities for them will be examined as well.

In the fourth chapter, I will analyze the data I obtained through my interviews conducted with the members and administrators of the women's NGOs I selected for this study.

In the conclusion, after summarizing the second and third chapters, I will briefly explore the data of the interviews and discuss my findings.

At this point, it becomes necessary to explain the methodology used to collect the data analyzed in the fourth chapter.

1.2. Methodology and Data Collection Process of the Present Research

This thesis is based on a field research that included in-depth interviews conducted in Cairo, Egypt between the dates of September 2005 – January 2006 thanks to a scholarship granted by the Egyptian Government.²

The sample of the field research was members and administrators of eleven Egyptian women's NGOs based in Cairo. In the scope of the research, I interviewed twenty-six women from these organizations, in addition to Nawal al-Sa'dawi, a well-known feminist in the world. Although it may seem that the number of the interviewees is small, qualitatively I believe that they are able to represent a visible section of women activists since they are all from the most active women's NGOs

² Although I arrived in Cairo in May 2005, I started doing my research in September because of an internship program I attended there and the length of my orientation process.

in Egypt in the fields of advocacy, research, development and charity-work.³ On the other hand, I didn't restrict the NGOs I selected to those that describe themselves feminist or specialize only in one specific area such as women's advocacy. By including women's NGOs from a wide spectrum without sticking to distinct identities, I aim to show how these NGOs with different aims and different working areas build their relationships with the state, what kind of problems they face and how they do cope with them as well as elaborate the differences in their relations with the state.

When selecting the NGOs for the present study, I excluded those with associational links such as political parties' women's branches or those affiliated with labor unions, as well. On the other hand, although it was not my intention to include any religious women's NGO at the outset, I decided to include the Young Christian Women Association to represent one from that area. However, this thesis is not aimed at providing a detailed analysis of the impact of religious movements in Egypt on the women's issues, Islamic activism and Islamic women's organizations. In that sense, the scope of the thesis is restricted to women's organizations which are not of Islamic nature. The impact of Islam and Islamic activism over the woman question in Egypt will only be touched upon when it is unavoidable.

This thesis was mainly based on the qualitative data of the in-depth interviews and the interpretations of the responses given by the interviewees. However, the extent of the thesis consists of a number of subjects selected out of the subjects covered in the in-depth interview schedule. I included mainly the topics such as major problems and difficulties women's NGOs experience with the state during their activities, what they identify as problematic for Egyptian women, what

³ Currently, the number of the women's NGOs in Egypt has reached 300 in total. However, the number of those that operate at the national level is 10 and only three of them are advocacy oriented.

they expect from the state regarding women's issues, interpretations of the interviewees about the National Council for Women as the major authority within state structure to deal with women's issues, and their relations with the National Council for Women and the Ministry of Social Affairs. I also included the data I obtained from the responses of the interviewees about their activities, projects and the extent of the co-operation among women's NGOs in Egypt.

On the other hand, I excluded topics about the interviewees' opinions about the concept of civil society, Egyptian CSOs and the problems they face in general, laws about the CSOs in Egypt, their motivations to participate in a CSO, the class basis of CSOs and so on. At the outset, my aim to include these topics in the interview schedule was to get a better and broader view of the problems of civil society in Egypt. However, since the scope of the present thesis is limited to women's organizations and state relations, other issues will be left to other analyses for other purposes.

As for interviews, I conducted them on the basis of the interview schedule given in Appendix A. I myself conducted the interviews: asked the questions one by one, recorded the answers and elaborated the answers with related questions when needed. In the writing process, in order to protect the anonymity of my interviewees, I haven't used their names when quoting them. This was a promise I made to them. I have also been careful when quoting- I haven't changed the wording or expressions used by them and tried to stay loyal to their responses except for a few grammatical corrections.

Interviews usually took place at the NGOs' offices, and rarely in the interviewees' homes or cafes.

1.3. The Limitations of the Study and the Problems Faced During Research

All my interviews were carried out in English. At this point, I have to admit that during some interviews I had difficulties concerning the language, especially with the interviewees who didn't speak English well. The problem was my very limited knowledge of Arabic. In those cases, I spent more time and effort to better understand what they meant and double checked everything they said with re-formulated questions. However, I believe that it had a restrictive impact on the responses to an extent.

In addition to the difficulty I had with the language, during my research I faced up with some other problems and interesting incidents I think worthy of mentioning here. First of them was related with sexual harassment in the streets of Egypt, which was to such an extent that men were harassing the veiled women, even women in *burqas*.⁴ As a matter of fact, although the protection it provides from male harassment to freely join public life is mentioned among the major reasons why women have increasingly taken up veil in the last decades in Egypt (Abu-Lughod, 1998; Ahmed, 1998; Azzam: 1996; Hoffman-Ladd, 1987; Moghadam: 2003), what I saw and experienced proved the contrary. Depending on my observations in Egypt, I can say that when the majority of women are veiled, the veil does not protect them from prevalent male harassment nor does it make women seen as less "sexual".⁵ Moreover, when advocating Islamic dress code for women,

⁴ My friends who could follow TV programs in Arabic were saying that when some people brought up the issue on TV, there appeared some in the audience who claimed that these women knew that they would get harassed in the streets and by going out of home, they already accepted to be harassed. So, one can think that what they want is that women should be locked up or simply "disappear".

⁵ At this point, it is important to draw attention to what Maha Azzam (1996: 225) emphasizes concerning the wearing of *hijab* by many in Egypt: "As the wearing of the *hijab* becomes more commonplace and popular, so attitudes become more relaxed as to the underlying meaning of dress, whereby it is less of a primary consideration in

although it is usually argued by Islamist women and men that it avoids women being seen as “sexual objects”, in the case of Egypt, women in “modest Islamic attire” become the object of sexual harassment as well. Therefore, it can be claimed that advocating women’s veiling as a way to be “more respectable and less sexual”, is deal with the problem on the surface instead of offering a real solution addressing the roots of the problem. Furthermore, that the majority is veiled in Egypt makes unveiled women more marginalized in the eyes of the society and more vulnerable to a more “legitimated” sexual harassment.

Moreover, I myself had nasty experiences, too. In addition to daily harassment incidents, which were happening maybe tens of times a day, I had to deal with some serious cases like some men who tried to break in my hotel room and then my apartment in addition to being harassed by an exhibitionist man⁶. As a woman researcher and activist volunteering with women’s NGOs in Turkey, what I found interesting was the reaction of the Egyptian people and security officers to the issue as well as the silence shown by women’s NGOs towards such issues. When you were harassed in the street and asked people or policemen for help, they were just laughing. On the other hand, there was no serious campaign against the sexual harassment in Egypt conducted by

dictating a particular type of behavior, for example one that is more distant or deferential between the sexes. In this respect, a woman’s appearance loses a large part of its uniqueness and becomes much more “matter-of-fact”.

⁶ I would like to detail the latter as it has serious implications on the nature of harassment issue in Egypt. In Ramadan, I came across an exhibitionist man when I was on my way to an NGO for an interview. When I screamed, people around caught him. At first, they were eyeing me in suspicion, but after they heard that I am Muslim too, which I had never used as an excuse before, some of them started slapping the harasser. I insisted to call the police and they tried to convince me not to. Instead, they suggested beating him up, then, when I stood firm about making a complaint, they suggested to hold him and offered me to beat him up. In the end, he was taken to the police station and I wrote a statement. After a week, the Director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights called me to say that weekly *Al-Fagr* covered the incident. In the news, our names (the harasser’s and mine), our ages, nationalities and jobs were openly given violating the right of privacy. This incident clearly points to the public attitude concerning harassment and identity of the victim, especially religious identity, and media’s (ir)responsibility in Egypt.

women's organizations despite the magnitude and urgency of the issue.⁷ Even there were some NGO people who advised me to look down when walking in the street and wear "modest" clothes to avoid harassment (although I was wearing long-sleeved shirts and loose jeans all the time), or excused it on the ground that Egyptian men cannot marry due to high costs! The state's way of dealing with the issue was also interesting in that first two wagons of the metro were reserved for women only.

On the other hand, TV shows and their content concerning women were very interesting for me. After watching them, I could better understand why almost all interviewees complained about women's representation in media. In my spare times, I used to watch some Egyptian TV shows with English subtitles. In almost all of them women were represented as "evil" beings who tried to cheat "pure and naïve" husbands and tried to convince them to stand up to their families to create *fitna* in the family, to acquire family fortune etc. They were portrayed as against the family structure and traditions. Even in one of them, two men were talking about a woman who was very ambitious and "vicious" who tried to destroy the family going against her husband's decisions and saying: "Is this what people call women's rights?". So, there was a misogynist approach towards women on TV and women's rights were associated with being "immoral, immodest and against the tradition and family".

Depending on my personal experiences and observations, I can say that misogyny is deeply rooted in the Egyptian society. However, neither the NCW nor other state institutions take steps to find solutions for these problems. At this point, it can be said that Egyptian women's organizations have to shoulder a heavy burden and struggle on many fronts.

⁷ However, the NGO I was volunteering with, the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights took up the issue after I had left Egypt due to the complaints made by us- the interns from other countries- in our conversations.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN'S ACTIVISM in EGYPT (1880s – 1981)

In this chapter, I will examine the emergence of women's activism in Egypt and the factors that gave way to it in the first section and its development, divergence and demands as well as the gains they made against the state in the second. In the third section, I will focus on the women's activism and organizations under the Nasser regime in line with Nasser's general policies. In this section, my aim is to show how state policies can create contradictory outcomes for women by taking into consideration Nasser's reforms and "state feminism" on the one hand, suppression and co-optation of all social and political activities on the other. Additionally, the "notorious" Law of Associations will be examined. In the fourth section, I will examine the shifts in the state policies under Sadat and what they and shifting alliances brought to women. The amendments made to the PSL and the debates around it as well as the regime's approach towards women's organizations will be explained here.

2.1. From Mohammad 'Ali Period to the Formal Independence

The awakening of women's activism in Egypt is usually traced back to the nineteenth century and the social, economic and political transformations brought about by the reforms embarked on by the state from then on (Guenena and Wassef, 1999; Badran, 1991; Badran 1995; Jayawardena, 1994; Ahmed, 1998; Al-Ali, 2000).

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Mohammad Ali started to rule the country and embarked on an ambitious modernization project. Policies pursued by Muhammad 'Ali brought about important social changes along. To make Egypt independent and modern, he introduced economic, administrative and educational reforms as part of his ambitious modernizing programme. To catch up with Europe on technological, military and engineering developments, he started sending student missions to Europe, and opening new schools for men in the beginning of the century. These reforms also extended to women's education which became a significant issue during this period. New reform attempts were made in order to open up new opportunities for women in education and work. In 1832 a school to train women doctors was founded by the state. In 1873 the state established the first secondary school and in 1874 the first secondary school for girls (Ahmed, 1998: 131-140). In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Egypt experienced growing dependence on the West in its economic life by being a major source of raw cotton and the economic situation started to deteriorate more and more due to the debts. In 1882, the British occupied Egypt on the pretext of protecting foreign economic interests (Badran, 1995: 11). During colonial period, economic and administrative reforms were directed in a way to serve the British's needs. On the other hand, during this period, an Egyptian urban middle class influenced by European political thought emerged as a result of the economic and social developments. Those who defended women's rights to education and argued against seclusion and veiling of women emerged out of this class as well as the upper classes (Jayawardena, 1986: 47).

The first debates on women's rights in Egypt appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, the scholars propose different opinions on the first advocates of women's rights in Egypt.

According to Jayawardena (1986: 48), the first advocates of women's rights in Egypt were male reformers of the nineteenth century, which was a period of intellectual discussion and reformist activity.

Like Jayawardena, Leila Ahmed (1998: 128) claims that women's issue and the new discourse on it first appeared in the writings of Muslim male intellectuals in Egypt as part of the debates to explain the causes of European advancement and Muslim societies' need to catch up with them, at the same time, linking the woman issue to nationalism, the need for national advancement and cultural change.

However, Badran (1995: 16; 1993: 129) argues that before the emergence of men's discourse on women's rights in Egypt, women had already begun to take steps questioning the patriarchal practices and institutions to improve their own lives and conditions from within "urban harem". She goes on to say that men's starting points were quite different from women's in that male reformers sought to explain their country's backwardness through women's position in the country.

Within this context, the first males to advocate for women's rights were Ahmed Fares al-Shidyak, Riffa Rafii el-Tahtawi, Sheik Mohammad Abduh and Qasim Amin, who all contributed to the debates on woman question in Egypt through their writings.

In 1855 Ahmed Fares El Shidyak published "One Leg Crossed Over the Other" in which he argued for women's emancipation by pointing to the patriarchy (Jayawardena, 1986: 48).

In 1894 Murqus Fahmi wrote a four-act play, *al-Mar'ah fi al-Sharq* (The Woman in the East) in which he connected the country's backwardness to women's backwardness due to their oppression by men within the family (Badran, 1995: 17).

And some male reformers started to defend the women's right to education. Tahtawi was a pioneer advocate of women's education in Egypt pointing to the need of educating women in his book entitled *A Guide to the Education of Girls and Boys* in 1872 (Jayawardena, 1986: 49).⁸

In the meantime there emerged some male religious scholars to argue for women's rights based on a re-interpretation of the Koran:

As in many Asian countries, the Egyptian reformers tried to show that it was not the tenets of religion that subordinated women, but rather an incorrect interpretation of that religion, and corrupt practices and additions which later contravened the purity of the original faith (Jayawardena, 1986: 49).

Sheik Mohammad Abduh and Qasim Amin took the lead in extracting women's rights from the Koran in Egypt. Abduh used arguments against polygamy, concubinage and women's slavery citing the Koran in the light of modern thought (Jayawardena, 1986: 49-50). The debate was carried further by Qasim Amin. In 1899 Qasim Amin published *Tahrir al-Mar'ah* (The Liberation of the Woman) in which he used an Islamic reformist approach to create ground for his arguments on women's emancipation as part of religious reform and national liberation. He called for women's education and for an end to face veiling, arranged marriages, women's seclusion, polygamy on the ground that they had nothing to do with Islam. He also based his arguments on bringing up children and improving the relationship between husband and wife. In *al-Mar'ah al-Jadidah* (The New Woman) which he published in 1900, he grounded his arguments on a more secular basis (Badran, 1995: 18-19) with an

⁸ Jayawardena explains male reformers' interest in women's education by that the new consciousness brought about by the social and educational reforms "...demanded an "enlightened" woman. The new bourgeois man, himself a product of Western education or missionary influence, needed as his partner a "new woman", educated in the relevant foreign language, dressed in the new styles and attuned to Western ways- a woman who was "presentable" in colonial society yet whose role was primarily in the home. These women had to show that they were the negation of everything that was considered "backward" in the old society..." (1986: 12).

emphasis on natural rights and the concept of progress (Jayawardena, 1986: 50).

As for women's activism in Egypt, it first emerged in "salon" meetings held by upper-class women and the publishing around some journals in the 1860s (Badran, 1991: 203).

As the remarkable outcome of the spread of education and literacy, women started to question their own situation and a new generation of women writers and poets emerged while books and journals became an important aspect of the women's movement (Jayawardena, 1986: 17; Ahmed, 1998: 140). In 1892, starting a women's press in Egypt, Hind Naufal founded the journal called *Al-Fatah* (The Young Girl). This created a new forum for women to discuss their problems and demands (Badran, 1991: 203-4).

Early in the century, women's feminist writing became more visible and women's journals were multiplied.⁹ Women wrote in the various women's journals such as *Anis Al-Jalis* (1898-1908), *Fatat Al-Sharq* (1906-1939), *Al-Jins Al-Latif* (1908-1924), *Al-'Afaf* (1910-1922), and *Fatat Al-Nil* (1913-1915) (Ahmed, 1998:172).

On the other hand, Malak Hifni Nassef whose pen-name was *Bahithat Al-Badiya* (Searcher in the Desert) began to publish articles in the paper of *Al-Jarida* which belonged to progressive *Al-Umma* Party.¹⁰ She mainly wrote on such issues as education, educational reform, marriage law reforms, evils of polygamy and men's unrestricted access to divorce and early marriage for girls. She was a very important feminist figure of the

⁹ There were 15 Arabic journals for women in Egypt around 1914 which were mostly edited by Syrian-Christian women (Jayawardena, 1986: 52).

¹⁰ Women had been writing for and editing journals since the 1890s and through 1900s but Nassef was the first woman to write articles to the mainstream press regularly (Ahmad, 1998: 172).

era and in 1911 she spoke in the Egyptian Legislative Assembly on the improvement of the status of women and put forward demands for universal primary education for girls, hygiene, first aid and child rearing, training of women as doctors and teachers, for women to participate in congregational worship in mosques. Her essays and speeches were published in 1918 in a book called *Al-Nisaiyyat* by the party press (Badran, 1991: 203-5; Ahmed, 1998: 172, 182; Jayawardena, 1986: 51). From 1909 to 1912 middle- and upper-class women also gave lectures at the new Egyptian university when no male students or faculty were present. Malak Hifni Nassef, Nabawiyya Musa, and Mayy Ziada, a poet and writer of Lebanese-Palestinian origin, were among the speakers (Badran, 1993: 134; Ahmed, 1998: 172).

The emergence of autonomous women's organizations and women's associations linked to political groups was the most important development in this period (Jayawardena, 1986: 22). In the beginning of the twentieth century women started to found dispensaries, nursery schools, and charitable associations for women, often serving boys and men as well. These were usually established and run by upper-class women (Badran, 1993: 133; Ahmed, 1998: 172).¹¹

Among them, in 1909 Mabarrat Muhammad Ali was founded by two princesses and run by a group of rural and urban upper-class women of different religious background in order to bring medical assistance and health instructions to poor women in their own neighbourhoods. Mabarrat Muhammad Ali provided clinics, and dispensaries and its activities were funded with bazaars, fetes, sweep sales and donates from the members and their own founders (Ahmed, 1998: 173; Badran, 1993: 133).¹²

¹¹ This era is called "social feminism" period by Margot Badran (Badran, 1993: 133).

¹² Beginning with a small clinic, this organization created twelve hospitals in Egypt and eighteen dispensaries and clinics, where patients were treated and supplied with

Sha'rawi and some other women explicitly placed this project in a feminist context, seeing it as the first step in the process of liberating the lives of lower-class women and, at the same time, expanding their own lives beyond the harem...This, not the widely visible participation of women in the 1919 nationalist demonstration, was the first time that upper-class harem women's unconventional, extra-domestic behaviour was legitimized as a nationalist act. (Badran, 1993: 133)

This was not the only society founded by women. There were also such women's organizations as the Society for the Advancement of Women in 1908, which took a conservative Islamic stance; the Intellectual Association of Egyptian Women in 1914 (Mayy Ziada and Huda Sha'rawi were among its founders); the Society of the Renaissance of the Egyptian Women; the Society of the New Woman established in 1919 (Ahmed, 1998: 172).

During the struggle for independence from 1919 to 1920, "the first priority for Egyptian feminists and nationalists of both sexes was independence" (Badran, 1996: 205). A group of politicians under the leadership of Saad Zaghlul formed a delegation to bring up the issue of Egypt's independence with the British. This group later emerged as the Wafd Party and was supported by intellectuals, teachers, students, peasants and women. When the British refused to negotiate and sent the Wafd leaders into exile, demonstrations and strikes broke up (Jayawardena, 1986: 51). "During this period, to a large extent, feminist and nationalist positions temporarily united in favour of the common cause." (Badran, 1996: 206). Both upper-class and peasant women participated in the Egyptian nationalist movement and marched throughout the streets to demonstrate against the occupation. In 1919, a women's branch of the Wafd political party called *Wafdist Women's Central Committee (WWCC)* was founded and Huda Sha'rawi was elected president. WWCC took radical stands from time to time and did

medication for free or for a nominal sum by 1961. In 1964 its hospitals were nationalized (Ahmad, 1998: 173).

not want to participate in auxiliary activities only. And in 1920, the WWCC raised objections publicly when the “male nationalist leadership” did not consult the WWCC on the party’s independence proposal (Badran, 1991: 206; Ahmed, 1998: 174).

2.2. The Formal Independence Period

After years of nationalist struggles engaged in against the British colonizers, Egypt gained its independence in 1922. With the formal independence, “... the feminist positions of progressive men and women which had drawn closest during colonial occupation and in the pre-independence nationalist movement started to diverge” (Badran, 1991: 207). A parliamentary democracy was established in the country and a new constitution was promulgated. The constitution of 1923 seemed to fulfil the promises made to women at first sight. It declared that “All Egyptians are equal before the law. They enjoy equally civil and political rights and equally have public responsibilities without distinction of race, language, or religion”. However the electoral law restricted the right to vote to males only and the following year, women-except wives of ministers and high officials- were prevented from attending the opening of the Parliament (Badran, 1991: 207; Badran, 1993: 135).

Egyptian women understood the message...Women might defend Egypt during time of crisis, but in ‘normal’ times men must govern and command the public sphere. ...after several decades of hidden feminist evolution they were prepared to act. (Badran, 1993: 135)

Since the promises made to them remained unfulfilled, in 1923, Huda Sha’rawi founded *Al-Ittihad Al-Nisa’i Al-Misri* (The Egyptian Feminist Union, EFU). The EFU elected a board of directors and an executive committee and drafted a constitution.¹³ Its agenda set up aims as raising

¹³ The membership of the union rose to about 250 by the late 1920s (Ahmad, 1998: 177).

Egyptian women's "intellectual and moral level" and enabling them to attain political, social and legal equality. However, initial priority was the women's education, new work opportunities and the Personal Status Law reform. It called for women's political rights, reform of the marriage laws related to polygamy and divorce, setting a minimum age for girls and also demanded an end to legalized prostitution. The EFU itself ran a day-care centre and a medical clinic for working mothers and gave trainings to poor women on health, hygiene and child care (Ahmed, 1998: 176; Badran, 1993: 135-136) along with a vocational training workshop to teach poor girls sewing and rug weaving, and an aid program providing widows with temporary monthly assistance. The EFU provided young women with scholarships to study in Europe beginning in the 1920s. These programs financially were run by Sha'rawi and other EFU members' on their own (Ahmed, 1998: 177).

The EFU tried to realize its cause through an array of tactics such as lobbying, petitioning, writing, commonly picketing and street demonstrations¹⁴ and two journals called *L'Egyptienne* and *Al-Misriyya* (Badran, 1993: 136).

The efforts put by Huda Sha'rawi and the members of the EFU helped bring about some important gains for women. In 1923, the Parliament issued a law that set a minimum marriage age of 16 for girls and of 18 for boys in response to a petition from the EFU. However this was the only gain made in this area and no progress was made in reforming the marriage laws afterwards until the 1970s (Ahmed, 1998: 177).

On the other hand, there were important advances for women in the area of education. In 1925, primary education for both girls and boys was made compulsory by the parliament while a secondary school for girls was opened by the government. Moreover, in the late 1920s,

¹⁴ Some EFU women were even jailed briefly in 1930 (Badran, 1993: 136).

women were admitted into the university for the first time under the pressure put by Huda Sha'rawi and the EFU (Ahmed, 1998: 177).

Connection with Western feminists had always been Sha'rawi's forte, and from its founding the EFU regularly sent delegates to international women's meetings. The organisational habits and skills thus acquired were used late in the promotion of Arab feminism. (Ahmed, 1998: 177).¹⁵

When the problems in Palestine in the 1930s were severed, Sha'rawi sent an invitation to Arab women to an "Eastern" feminist conference to be convened in Cairo on October 15, 1938 in order to support the Palestinian cause. The conference was attended by delegates from 7 Arab countries (Ahmed, 1998: 177-8). "Waving the banner of Arab unity, the Pan-Arab Feminist conference again won the praise of governments and the Islamic establishment for their nationalist actions" (Badran, 1991: 211).

This led to first pan-Arab feminist conference in 1944 resulting in the creation of *Al-Ittihad Al-Nisa'i Al-'Arabi* (The Arab Feminist Union) under the presidency of Huda Sha'rawi (Ahmed, 1998: 177-8; Badran, 1991: 211).

In the second half of the 1940s, the EFU's failure to serve the needs of a broader base of women and its elitist approach in broadening its base

¹⁵ When exploring feminism in Egypt led by Huda Sha'rawi, Leila Ahmed claims "...Critical tensions also emerged within feminist discourse; of the two divergent strains of feminism, one became the dominant voice of feminism in Egypt and in the Arab Middle East for most of the century, and the second remained an alternative, marginal voice until the last decades of the century, generally not even recognized as a voice of feminism. The dominant voice of feminism, which affiliated itself, albeit generally discreetly, with the westernizing, secularizing tendencies of society, predominantly the tendencies of the upper, upper-middle, and middle-middle classes, promoted a feminism that assumed the desirability of progress toward Western-type societies. The alternative voice, wary of and eventually even opposed to Western ways, searched a way to articulate female subjectivity and affirmation within a native, vernacular, Islamic discourse..." (Ahmed, 1992: 174). Unlike Badran who calls it "nascent feminism", she calls Sha'rawi's feminism "a Westward-looking feminism" (Ahmed, 1992: 179).

encouraged the founding of other feminist organizations headed by middle-class women (Badran, 1991: 212).

In this context, in the 1940s women's movement started to diverge and took different directions: While the aristocratic, charity-oriented women gathered around "the salon" affiliated with Princess Chevikar, there emerged other charity-oriented, political and some pro-communist women's organizations as well as Islamist oriented Muslim Women's Society created by Zeinab Al-Ghazali (Al-Ali, 2000: 66).

In 1944, Fatma Ni'mat Rashid founded *Hizb Al-Nisa'i Al-Watani*, the National Feminist Party. The NFP had a broad agenda of economic and social reforms and carried out literacy and hygiene campaigns among lower-class women. It was also the first feminist group to advocate birth control and abortion in Egypt. Although it had predominantly middle-class membership, it did not have a wide appeal (Badran, 1993: 137; Badran, 1991: 212).

In 1948, another women's organization was founded by Duriyya Shafiq, which was called *Al-Ittihad Bint Al-Nil* (the Daughter of the Nile Union, DNU). The DNU had a feminist agenda similar to that of the NFP aiming to gain full political rights for women and promoting literacy programmes, campaigning to improve cultural, health and social services among the poor as being the first organization to establish a broad base in the provinces. Duriyya Shafiq affiliated the organization with the International Council of Women under the name of the National Council for Egyptian Women which caused disputes and resentment among other women's organizations (Badran, 1993: 138; Badran, 1991: 212; Al-Ali, 2000: 64; Ahmed, 1998: 203).

In comparing Bint Al-Nil with Egyptian Feminist Union of Huda Sha'rawi....Bint Al-Nil seemed to be much less inclined to accept official authority and was much more independent than the EFU ever was. In that Bint Al-Nil was not only

autonomous from any political party but also openly challenged the state. (Al-Ali, 2000: 64)

Shafiq was more confrontational than others and took quite militant actions. She led a three-hour sit-in with a thousand women at the Egyptian Parliament in 1951 to campaign for the political rights (Badran, 1993: 138). She mounted hunger strikes and her union even had a paramilitary unit of two hundred women who received military training (Ahmed, 1998: 203).

On the left side of the spectrum, Inji Aflatoun and Saiza Nabarawi emerged as new women leaders in the 1940s. In 1945 Inji Aflatoun helped establish the *Rabitat Fatayat Al-Jami'a Wa Al-Ma'hid* (The League of University and Institutes' Young Women). However this organization was closed down the next year as part of the activities to suppress communists (Badran, 1993: 138; Badran, 1991: 212-213; Al-Ali, 2000: 66)¹⁶.

In 1951, Saiza Nabarawi and Inji Aflatoun founded *The Lagnat Al-Nisa' Lil Muqawama Al-Sha'biyya*, The Women's Committee for Popular Resistance, to coordinate women's resistance when violence broke out in the Canal Zone, joining male nationalists in defence of the country once again. This organization brought together Nabarawi, Aflatoun, Hawa Idris, Hikmat Al-Ghazali and other socialist and Islamist women (Badran, 1993: 139; Badran, 1991: 214). "During this time, women's feminist and nationalist activism occurred side by side" (Badran, 1993: 139).

¹⁶ Inji Aflatoun linked gender oppression to wider economic and social problems, connecting them to imperialist exploitation while insisting on political rights for women and reforming the personal status laws. At the same time, in her books (*Nahnu Al-Nisa' Al-Misriyyat-We* Egyptian Women, 1949; *Thamanun Milyun Imra'a Ma'na*, 1949) she argued that women's rights were compatible with Islam (Badran, 1993: 138, Al-Ali, 2000: 66).

2.3. Nasser Period and the Suppression of the Women's Activism

In 1952, a group of army officers, who called themselves the Free Officers, overthrew the monarchy with a coup d'état. Gamal Abdul Nasser emerged as the leader of the group and embarked on a project as the President to transform the country's social and economic system through a programme of land reform, industrialization, a central planning with an emphasis on education and welfare. The new state took on socialist measures such as the nationalization of industry, trade and finance leaving the state as the sole economic actor and job provider (Abdelrahman, 2004: 90-93).

Nasser regime was intolerant of any social force outside state control perceiving it as a threat to its own power. Soon, all political parties were banned, and Egypt was ruled by a single-party political system- the National Union was established in 1957 and the Arab Socialist Union in 1962, around which the authoritarian regime mobilized the masses. The Nasser regime either repressed all political forces or co-opted them through re-organization along corporation lines consistent with the regime's ideology. On the other hand, professional syndicates, NGOs and workers' unions were subordinated to the government's strict control. The government appointed syndicate officers directly and all labour unions were organized into a single labour confederation (Abdelrahman, 2004: 93, 96).

In 1956, after Articles 54 to 80 of the Civil Code about the right of association were annulled with a decree, all associations and NGOs were dissolved and forced to register with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA). On 12 February 1964 a new Law of Associations, also known as Law Number 32 of 1964, was issued subjecting NGOs to strict regulations and more state control through the MOSA. According to the second article of this law, all existing NGOs were to be de-registered and

re-apply for a license within six months. If they declined, they were to be considered dissolved automatically. Moreover, with the same article the MOSA's right to deny granting license to any NGO whose objectives were considered threatening to "the security of the Republic" and "social order" was reconfirmed. On the other hand, the MOSA was not to allow an NGO to be established if "the community does not need its services or if there are other organizations providing the same services in the area" (Article 8). Not only did this article give the state authorities an unclear criterion to deny registration to an NGO that "the ministry did not consider functional for its purposes", but also did it "ensure the singular, non-competitive nature of these organizations". Moreover, based on the Article 30, the Ministry could merge a number of NGOs if they were considered providing similar services in one community. In addition, all NGOs were required to inform the Ministry of the dates of their general assembly and board of directors meetings beforehand and send a copy of the minutes. According to Article 36, the MOSA, if necessary, had the right to call on general assembly to have a meeting. Another article, Article 33, gave the MOSA the right to "terminate any decision taken by the association's authorities if it violates (...) the law or the system of the organization (...) the public system (...) or the moral system". Also the Ministry had the right to judge certain acts committed by members of NGOs as criminal offences that could result in imprisonment for up to six months, such as conducting activities prior to official registration or different from the areas specified in the registered objectives, letting those who are not NGO members take part in the activities, falsifying the NGO records and raising funds by means that are not specified by law (Abdelrahman, 2004: 94, 129-131). This law helped the state to control and suppress NGOs for decades.

As part of the suppression of all the independent political groupings, there was also a clampdown on the women's activism (Badran, 1993: 139). However, Nasser's policies had much more diverse impacts on the

women's situation and their activism. While the women's activism was suppressed, this was accompanied by important reforms whereby women's situation underwent great changes due to the new welfare state's commitment to social egalitarianism resulted in increased opportunities and rights granted to women (Badran, 1993: 139, Al-Ali, 2000: 66-67).

For Egyptian women, who were scorned by the pre-1952 states, the new welfare state offered explicit commitment to public equality for women. It contributed to the development of state feminism as a legal, economic, and ideological strategy to introduce changes to Egyptian society and its gender relations. In its own turn, state feminism contributed to the political legitimacy of Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime and its progressive credentials (Hatem, 1992: 231).¹⁷

Within this context, the 1956 constitution and its revised 1963 version declared that all Egyptians were equal irrespective of gender. In the meantime, labour laws were amended to guarantee state sector jobs for all university graduates while education at all levels was made free. Moreover, in 1956 women were granted the right to vote and run for political office (Al-Ali, 2000: 68; Ahmed, 1998: 209-210; Badran, 1993: 139). In addition, the state provided working women with supporting social services like maternity leave and child care, and the right to work in general (Hatem, 1994: 664).

As Badran (1991: 217) states it "the intentions of the state, however, were made clearer in its actions than its official discourse". Although women's organizations were able to continue their activities after the Revolution a while, the state came down against them, too. In 1953, when a proposed Electoral Law was under review, Duriyya Shafiq published *Al-Kitab Al-Abiyyad Lil Huquq Al-Mar'a Al-Misriyya* (the White Paper on the Rights of the Egyptian Women). When the women's

¹⁷ While Hatem calls this *state feminism*, she notes that this concept of state feminism refers more to "ambitious state programs that introduce important changes in the reproductive and productive roles of women" than to "formal (legal and ideological) state commitment to women's rights" (Hatem, 1992: 231).

suffrage was rejected, she held a sit-in at the Parliament and engaged in a hunger strike (Badran, 1991: 216). After starting another hunger strike in 1957 in order to protest against the occupation of Egyptian and Palestinian lands by Israel and, as she called, the dictatorship regime in Egypt, she was put under house arrest in her apartment (Al-Ali, 2000: 64). On the other hand, the same year women were granted the right to vote, the state started to ban women's organizations. The EFU was dissolved and allowed to work under the name of the Huda Sha'rawi Association as a social welfare society. Moreover, the EFU purged the membership of Saiza Nabarawi who was accused of being a communist, because of the pressure put by the government. In the meantime, feminists, following the achievement of women's suffrage, in order to raise awareness of poor women on their rights, formed a committee called *Al-Lajna Al-Nisa'iyya lil Wa'i Al Qawmi Intikhabi* (Women's Committee for Electoral Awareness) but it was closed down in a year. Around this time, Nabarawi, Aflatoun, and a broad coalition of women formed *Al-Ittihad al-Nisa'i al-Qawmi* (the National Feminist Union, the NFU). However, the government blocked this project by refusing to issue the organization with a permit, and closed it down in 1959. By 1959, Aflatoun was sent to prison, Rashid's feminist party was dissolved, and Nabarawi was silenced. In 1964, the formation of women's political organizations was banned while the Muslim Sisters was dissolved and Zainab Al-Ghazali was imprisoned. The Women's Committee for Popular Resistance was banned, the EFU youth group was dissolved for being seen as too leftist (Badran, 1991: 217; Badran, 1993: 140).

According to Al-Ali (2000: 67-68), these contradictory moves can be interpreted as that under Nasser women's issues were co-opted by the state and formulated as social welfare issues through the activities of the Ministry of Social Affairs. And although significant advances for women were made in the areas of education and employment, the conservative Personal Status Laws of the 1920s and 1930s remained unchanged and

in effect. These laws defined women economically dependent on men and denied them the right to initiate divorce (Al-Ali, 2000: 68, Hatem, 1992: 232).

In short, state feminism under the Nasser regime produced women, who were economically independent of their families, but dependent on the state for employment, important social services like education, health and day care, and political representation. While state feminism created and organized a system of public patriarchy, it did not challenge the personal and familial views of women's dependency on men that were institutionalized by the personal status laws and the political system (Hatem, 1992: 233).

However, Al-Ali (2000: 71) and Badran (1991: 215) both point out that a new generation of feminists took advantage of the opportunities opened up by the Nasserite state in education and work and gained their intellectual, social and professional skills in this era. "In this atmosphere of repression, feminists sharpened survival skills that would be useful in the battles they would encounter in the 1970s and 1980s" (Badran, 1991: 215).

2.4. Sadat and the *Infitah* Period

Under Sadat, the Egyptian state underwent significant changes. First of all there was a shift from socialism and anti-western approach to *Infitah* (open-door) capitalism and pro-western policies as well as from Pan-Arabism to a focus on "Egyptianism" (Badran, 1991: 221).

In the sphere of economy, the state withdrew from the social equality and equal opportunity policies. The priority was given to the private sector and Western and Arab investment in the hope that this would boost the economy. However, that led to an increasing gap between the poor and rich. On the other hand, the new regime allied with the West and the U.S.A and international organizations such as IMF and the

World Bank (Al-Ali, 2000: 71). Meanwhile the official commitments to gender equality under the former regime were abandoned as well. Along with the *Infitah* policies and state's reduction of investment in public services and job creation, lower-middle-class and working class women started to suffer from reduced employment opportunities and poor working conditions (Al-Ali, 2000: 71-72).

This was also a period of acceleration of "Islamic fundamentalism". After the 1967 war with Israel, it began to become more visible mainly among university students of lower middle class who mostly had come from the rural areas (Badran, 1993: 140). The Sadat regime initially cooperated with the Islamists for pragmatical reasons. It wanted to gain support and legitimacy through manipulating Islamist groups and using a religious tone while, at the same time, aiming to weaken leftists and Nasserites. This, in turn, led to an increasing Islamist revival that led to Sadat's assassination by a Muslim fundamentalist in 1981 (Al-Ali, 2000: 73).

On the other hand, under Sadat, in line with the *Infitah* policies, the state started to loosen its tight control over the society, social forces and political groupings "in an attempt to impress his new allies". The re-establishment of political parties was allowed as a sign of the new regime's economic and political liberalization. However, authoritarian laws including emergency measures after the 1977 food riots and the introduction of the law of *aib* (shame) that banned any criticism of the regime labelling it unethical, and the arrest of all Sadat's opponents both from the political parties and professional syndicates made it clear that "Sadat's marginal concessions to political freedom were no more than a facade that masked the continuation of Nasser's strategies of co-opting or repressing the most active social forces which posed a threat to the hegemony of the regime" (Abdelrahman, 2004: 99).

In this era, while the state allowed a space for political and social groupings, it continued its control by dividing them into separate categories and classifying the women's and youth organizations "auxiliary mass organizations". These "auxiliary" organizations lacked the independence and the ability to determine their own goals as others did (Hatem, 1994: 665).

This suggests that the political parameters set for the only women's organization were more illiberal than those for any other group. While the different mass organizations and their adult members were free to determine their programs and representatives, members of the women's organization were denied these choices and singled out for the special status of "permanent wards of the state". The special relationship of the women's organization to the state did not change. Thus the measures taken to further pluralism did not signal a greater margin of political liberty for women's organizing efforts. Interestingly, the politically-active members of the women's organization did not challenge this arrangement, but accepted it as giving them the status of junior partners of the state. (Hatem, 1994: 666).

Moreover, with Law no. 2 of 1977, the state placed further restrictions on women's political groupings by outlawing political parties to be formed on the bases of religion, geography, or class, or those that discriminated on the bases of gender, origin, religion or doctrine (Hatem, 1994: 666).

Also, at the beginning of this period, in the new constitution promulgated in 1971 a dichotomy between women as "(public) citizens and as (private) family members governed by the Shari'ah" was stated. In Article 40 of the 1971 constitution, it was stated that "Citizens are equal before law; they are equal in public rights and duties, with no discrimination made on the basis of race, sex, language, ideology or belief". On the other hand, it declared that "The State guarantees a balance and accord between a woman's duties towards her family on the one hand and towards her work in society and her equality with man in the political, social, and cultural spheres on the other, without violating the laws of the Islamic Shari'ah". According to Badran (1991: 222-223), although this

declaration of no discrimination on the basis of sex seems to be a step forward, when interpreted in the light of other one, it rendered women's right to the full citizenship subject to male control.

Badran (1991: 224) argues that women were under enormous contradictory pressures in this era. The state was propagating an ideology that "curtailed women's public roles encouraging a retreat into the home" in different ways instead of promoting full citizenship as done under the Nasser era. "Yet, paradoxically, it was under Sadat that the Personal Status Law was reformed in favour of women's rights" (Al-Ali, 2000: 71).

Under Anwar Sadat's wife Jihan Sadat's push for that presidential decree, for which it came to be known as "Jihan's Law", and due to Sadat's parting the ways with the Islamists, the Personal Status Law (PSL) was amended in 1979 for the first time in fifty years. The PSL of 1979 granted women the right to initiate divorce, added protection in case of divorce, such as divorced mothers' right to the family home until their children grew up and placed restrictions on polygyny. Moreover, in 1979 the government enacted another law that guaranteed women thirty seats in Parliament. In 1979, again under the significant influence by Jihan Sadat, Family Status Law that reaffirmed woman's right to divorce, raised the legal age for marriage from sixteen to eighteen and gave her the right to travel without the husband's permission was amended (Al-Ali, 2000: 73-74; Badran, 1991: 224). However, Hatem (1994: 668) argues that these changes did not diminish male privilege. In the case of the seats accorded to women, they were added to the original number of the parliamentary seats that did not threaten the male candidates' situation. As for the personal status law, women were not granted an unconditional right to divorce, polygyny was just added to the list of conditions they could file for a divorce on grounds that this was a source of harm to her.

These amendments are interpreted as tactical moves by Margot Badran (1991: 222):

Meanwhile, the advocacy of women's causes espoused by Jihan Sadat and inspired by the UN Decade of Women (1975-1985) was encouraged by the state. However, the more independent and radical feminism promoted by Nawal Al-Saadawi and others was contained. This has been interpreted in part as a result of Jihan Sadat's drive, and her ability as the president's wife to style herself the supreme advocate of women's causes in Egypt and so to keep competing feminists out of the limelight. However, on another front, the government could not tolerate independent feminist activism because of its need to appease conservative Islamist forces.¹⁸

In that view, Al-Ali (2000: 74) agrees with Badran:

Women basically lacked independent representative organizations of their own and were dependent on the regime's particular needs. The beginning of the UN Decade for Women in 1975 caused the regime, which was searching for stronger ties with its new allies, particularly the United States, to promote gender issues. Despite the progressive laws of 1979, the state lacked an overall programme to ensure women's rights and did not encourage independent feminist activism.

Mervat Hatem (1992: 243) further argues that the law, which was passed by a presidential decree to overcome the criticisms, was attacked by both the Left and the Right. While the Right argued against it claiming that it contradicted the Shari'ah, the Left was bothered with the way it was passed, claiming that it was an example of state authoritarianism.

This placed political women mobilized by the Left and the Right in a difficult position. Their support for the badly needed changes introduced by the law was pitted against some important ideological and political principles they were

¹⁸ Under Sadat, Safinaz Kazim was imprisoned three times in 1973, 1975, and 1981 (Badran 1996: 223). In this era, Nawal al-Saadawi appeared to discuss such taboo issues as clitoridectomy, female sexuality and double standards against women's sexuality prevalent in the society, patriarchy and obsession about female virginity in her book *al-Mar'a wa al-Jins* (Women and Sex) that came out the year after Sadat came to power and in her subsequent writings. However, she lost her job at the Ministry of Health and went into self-imposed exile afterwards (Badran, 1993: 140-141).

committed to. Those who chose to defend the law were bothered by what the opposition said it represented politically. For others more swayed by the ideological arguments, it was equally troubling to denounce the modest and badly needed changes it introduced. In other words, the law created ideological dissonance among women. It failed to bring the regime the unqualified support of this important constituency (Hatem, 1992: 243).

In brief, during Sadat era women were caught between the regime's and Islamists' pressure. While the regime allied itself respectively with Islamists and the Western powers, it first enacted some conservative laws in search for legitimacy, then, after parting the ways with Islamists, it amended the Personal Status Law and accorded women thirty seats in the Parliament due to the need for international support and the beginning of the UN Decade for Women in 1975. However, When Sadat era came to an end with his assassination, women still lacked independent organizations of their own and there was still not a general state programme to promote women's rights (Al-Ali, 2000: 74).

CHAPTER 3

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S ACTIVISM

In this chapter, I will examine the relations between the state and women's organizations, which have mushroomed after the 1980s, by focusing on the political developments of the era and the civil society in general under Mubarak regime. Within this framework, laws regarding the freedom of association and women's rights will be explained while the detailed examination of the factors shaping the relations between the state and the women's NGOs, achievements and demands as well as the steps undertaken by the state under Mubarak is given.

3.1. Mubarak Period and the Political Background

A week after Sadat's assassination in 1981, vice-president Hosni Mubarak was elected President. When he came to power, Egypt was in ideological, socioeconomic, and political disillusionment. The 1967 defeat put an end to the dream of Arab power, nationalism and unity. Sadat's peace treaty with Israel caused Egypt to be isolated from the Arab world and created dissent in the country (Kassem, 2004: 26). On the other hand, the *Infitah* failed to stimulate economic growth and resulted in growing disparity between the poor and rich, a consumption boom and increasing unemployment (Kassem, 2004: 26; El-Mikawy, 1999: 41). So, when Mubarak came to office, he had to deal with economic problems on the one hand and democracy on the other.

"The early years of the Mubarak regime were characterized by a search for stabilization and consolidation" (Al-Ali, 2000: 75). At the international

level, Mubarak managed to re-establish the Egypt's ties with the other Arab states and eventually started to take on a mediating role in the region (Karam, 1998: 69). At the national level, he released hundreds of political detainees imprisoned by Sadat and lifted bans on opposition papers such as *al-Da'wa* and *al-Ahali*. Moreover he started to meet with the opposition leaders to discuss the controversial issues (El-Mikawy, 1999: 42). In that sense, the new president "portrayed himself as a prominent advocate of democracy" (Kassem, 2004: 43).

However, Mustapha Kamil Al-Sayyid (1995: 281) interprets this "democratic" approach shown by the new president as a tactic required by the conditions:

...a return to the single mass organization of the 1950s was not practical in 1981 because that formula had been discredited in the eyes of the public and ruling groups since the military defeat of June 1967. The ruling elite appreciated the diplomatic and economic benefits that the regime could achieve through the maintenance of a liberal façade, believing this would induce Western governments and investors to be more sympathetic toward the country. In addition, a liberal political formula offered the additional advantage of isolating the more radical opposition groups intent on continuing the armed struggle against the government because most other opposition groups had aspired to this formula during the last years of Sadat's rule. Thus, Mubarak must have thought that a little dose of political liberalization would not seriously threaten the stability of his government, but rather would ease tensions caused by his predecessor's harsh methods of dealing with the opposition.

Eventually he allowed the political parties again. On the other hand, while he pointed out his government was determined to suppress all forms of "religious extremism", he allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to participate in the elections in 1984 and 1987 parliamentary elections by forming alliances with other political parties (Karam, 1998: 69-70). Finally in the parliamentary elections held in 2005, the independent candidates of the Muslim Brotherhood won 88 seats that make up 20 % of the total.

This has been interpreted in a way that Mubarak tried to manipulate the Islamist groups for his own benefit, like his predecessors. On the one hand, Mubarak was trying to encourage the moderate Islamist groups as a means of countering the radical Islamists by allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to participate in the elections by forming alliances with other parties, on the other hand, he tried to encourage the secular opposition both on the left and the centre-right as a tactic to prevent radical religious groups from gaining dominance over others (Abdelrahman, 2004: 114; Karam, 1998: 72). He was also taking repressive measures against Islamists. However, at the beginning of the 1990s Mubarak's continuous repressive measures against the radical Islamist groups intensified their violent actions against both civilians and state representatives and more repressive and violent measures culminated in more violence by the Islamists (Abdelrahman, 2004: 114).

The regime's stance on political Islam is currently very vague (Abdelrahman, 2004: 114). On the one hand, while the radical groups are suppressed as mentioned above, Islamic associations are given greater freedom in their decision-making and activities (Karam, 1998: 74). On the other hand, the regime tries to contain the more moderate Islamists by promoting an image of an accurate interpreter of Islam through media and the Al-Azhar (Abdelrahman, 2004: 114). Furthermore, in order to ease the pressure, the state takes a more conciliatory approach on certain issues. For example, President Mubarak has approved the censorship and the banning of some literature, poetry or political books, which have been claimed to not conform to Islamic requirements (Karam, 1998: 74). In this ambiguity and complexity, as Karam (1998: 75) puts it "Mubarak's state regime seems to be caught between trying to moderate and control a vaguely defined and borderless "extremism", whilst at the same time trying not to alienate the generally growing conservatism in the country".

The last important feature of the Mubarak regime is the laws, some of which it inherited from the past rulers and enabled the regime to restrict the liberties more and more. One of these laws is Emergency Law, which was first enacted under Sadat and extended under Mubarak in 1981 after Sadat's assassination and have continued to be renewed every three years (Kienle, 2000: 15, 89). On the other hand, the amendments made on the Penal Code in 1992 allowed the authorities to judge what constitutes the encouragement of terrorism and pursue people suspected of getting involved in such activities. Along with the Law of Associations, these laws "further strengthen its repressive capacity vis-à-vis associations" (Al-Sayyid, 1994: 283-284).

3.2. Civil Society under Mubarak

Civil society in Egypt has witnessed a significant proliferation in the last two decades and there have emerged numerous organizations. The most recent data shows that there are twenty-three trade union federations, twenty-five professional associations, seventeen political parties besides thousands of NGOs although there are no certain figures on their number (Kienle, 2000: 34; Kassem, 2004: 104)¹⁹. According to the latest MOSA estimate, the number of NGOs is around 15.000. However, independent studies put different figures at around 20.000 and 28.000 including the NGOs that are not registered with MOSA or registered under another legal category (Abdelrahman, 2004: 121).

In spite of its size, "civil society remains as weak an entity under Mubarak as under his predecessors" (Kassem, 2004: 104). Law No. 32 of 1964, enacted in Nasser era, enabled Mubarak regime to exercise vast power over CSOs by preventing the founding of or allowing disbanding of an organization. Restrictions mostly applied to an existing

¹⁹ Co-operatives, syndicates and trade unions are governed by different set of laws from those regulating the NGOs and not considered to be NGOS (Abdelrahman, 2004: 121, Al-Sayyid, 1994: 272).

or a planned association addressed issues of “a delicate or thorny nature” (Kienle, 2000: 33-34). The regime did not try to restrict the activities of development associations since they were usually formed by civil servants and complementary to official policies where state resources proved insufficient (Kienle, 2000: 34). What was perceived as a threat and tried to be kept under control was the independent human rights organizations whose emergence in the 1980s was a relatively new phenomenon (Kassem, 2004: 105).

Human rights organizations, “which from the regime’s point of view were of a disturbing kind” (Kienle, 2000: 122), have been under more hostility by the regime (Kassem, 2004: 119).

According to Kassem (2004: 117), what makes the human rights organizations controversial as much “stems from the regime’s perception of what constitutes human rights and its inability to comprehend attempts by civil society groups to defend them. Put simply, it is an issue in which definitions and viewpoints invariably differ”.

With wider restrictions on the liberties in general, Kienle (2000:5) explains the regime’s illiberal measures (i.e. torture, trials of civilians by military courts, death sentences) and the association of human rights organizations with terrorist groups in “government rhetoric” with the fear of losing its control:

At the same time, the economic evolution affected the evolution of liberties because the regime lost, or was afraid to lose, control over a number of activities and actors previously directly dependent upon it. Those measures which sought to liberalize the economy limited the influence of the regime over the running of part of the economy. In both cases, it seems that the regime sought to compensate, even overcompensate, for this loss of control by new restrictions on liberties.

In the late 1980s, there emerged first independent human rights organization in Egypt, the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), which constitutes the best example of the hostility shown by the State towards human rights organizations. Although the EOHR was founded in 1985, it was refused registration by the MOSA on the grounds that there was another organization working in the same field, and therefore the EOHR's existence was not needed (Kassem, 2004: 119-120). The organization, despite the on-going harassments by the state, continued to function in the 1990s without a legal status "thanks to the weight of its uninterrupted existence for more than a decade and its reputation abroad" (Kienle, 2000: 122). Moreover, in July 2000, the closure of the Ibn Khaldoun Center and arrest of its director, Sa'd al-Din Ibrahim demonstrate the continual of the harassment and denigration campaigns and the repressive measures taken by the regime (Kienle, 2000: 122).²⁰

In the late 1990s, the relations between the regime and human rights organizations began to deteriorate again and "a campaign of denigration and harassment" against these organizations was launched by the regime²¹. They were accused of publishing "false" reports, working for foreign interests and being "instruments in the hands of the terrorists" (Kienle, 2000: 96) by the Minister of Interior several times. Moreover, new laws were enacted to further regulate their activities. In 1998 a new law amending the company law was enacted to prevent companies from activities similar to those of private voluntary associations (Kienle, 2000: 97).

²⁰ There are no official figures on the number of NGOs that have been closed down, denied registration or of which board of directors has been dissolved by MOSA. However, Abdelrahman, based on the field research he conducted, proposes that 48 NGOs were dissolved permanently or to replace their board of directors with the MOSA-appointed ones in 1995 alone. Twenty-six were denied registration, six of which for "security reasons" (Abdelrahman, 2004: 136).

²¹ Because of the confrontation with the state as these examples show, to escape the scope of this law, some associations were established as companies (Kienle, 2000: 34) or preferred to operate without being registered (Kassem, 2004: 120).

In May 1999 to replace the Law No. 32 of 1964, a new law, Law No. 153 was enacted to regulate the activities of the associations and NGOs, after a long period of public debate. Before the enactment of the law, a one-year campaign was carried out by a broad alliance of NGOs, including human rights and social development NGOs, which was formed against the law. This was followed by a Declaration of Principles signed by sixty-seven NGOs and civil society organizations to defend the right to freely form NGOs, independent political activities and demand a democratic environment in which they would act freely. This gave way to holding meetings between Merwat el-Tellawi, the Minister of Social Affairs, and the NGO representatives. They drafted a blueprint of the bill and presented it to the authorities (Fouad, Ref'at, Murcos, 2005: 101, 108-112). However, "civil society received a surprise on May 14, 1999 when the Council of Ministers approved the bill on associations, which did not correspond to what had been agreed upon by the Drafting Committee...creating a strong feeling of being deceived" (Fouad, Ref'at, Murcos, 2005: 113).²²

With regard to the new law, Kienle (2000: 118) argues that "[I]n its final form, Law No. 153 did not necessarily further reduce the freedom of association but clearly failed to extend it to the degree that many Egyptians had hoped". Under the new law, associations were prevented from pursuing activities which threatened "national unity", were contrary to "public order", or activities that were political in nature, those that fell into the realm of political parties, trade unions or professional syndicates, or aimed at economic benefit. According to him, the major difference between the former and new laws was the replacement of the

²² A group of NGO representatives declared a hunger strike to protest the new law and four NGO representatives, former consultative committee members to draft the new law-Dr. Adel Abu Zahra, Dr. Tarek Ali Hassan, Mohammed Abdul Aziz al-Gindi, Amr Salim- disclaimed their responsibility for it since it met the minimal demands of all parties (Fouad, Ref'at, Murcos, 2005: 113).

statements such as threatening the welfare of the republic or the form of its government with the “blanket” ban of “political activities”.

However, like Al-Sayyid (1994: 282) who points to the fact that “political activity” term has been interpreted loosely to deny registration to some certain organizations, Abdelrahman (2004: 131) interprets the law in a contrary way and argues that

While affirming all the existing rights of MOSA over NGOs without any modification, Law 153 further tightened the State’s grip on them. The main criticism about the law concerned advocacy and human rights organizations. Article 11 prohibited NGOs from carrying out any political activity covered by laws governing political parties, or any activity that was political in nature. Accordingly, most advocacy groups, especially human rights organizations, whose activities include providing legal aid, election monitoring and the defense of political prisoners and could be labeled “political”, were at risk.

In 2000, Law No. 153 was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Constitutional Court on the grounds that it violated the law that requires any law to be approved by *Majles Al-Shourah* (The Upper Chamber of Parliament) (Abdelrahman, 2004: 113) and the government reverted back to Law No. 32 (Kassem, 2004: 122).

However, in June 2002, the Parliament enacted a new law, “a carbon copy of Law 153” (Kassem, 2004: 122), which includes most of the articles of the former law raising severe criticisms again (Abdelrahman, 2004: 132).

Against this background, Abdelrahman (2004: 36) argues that state-civil society relations in Egypt can be described as corporatist. According to him (2004: 120):

The government has used a policy mix of repression and co-optation/ corporatization towards NGOs. The legal infrastructure has been employed for decades to co-opt

these organizations in order to use their resources and mass base for its own interests instead of totally crushing them.

He goes on to say that (2004: 135)

It is fair to say that the State's corporatist policies towards NGOs have not met any significant resistance from the majority of these organizations until now. Most have complied with the ban on political and other activities that are considered to pose a threat to the State's hegemony. In return, the State has allowed these NGOs to conduct their business as long as they follow the general guidelines of MOSA, and has rewarded them for their compliance in various ways.

The State used various mechanisms under the Law of Associations to favor NGOs that do not challenge it and comply with the Ministry. The "co-optation of elements of NGOs" has been mainly based on the Ministry's right to appoint up to 50 per cent of board members in some cases, to cancel elections, to send its representatives to attend the meetings, to allocate grants to some NGOs and to control and approve the foreign funds received by NGOs, which is the main source of revenue for most of them, thus, is the main instrument for "remedy as well as disciplining them" (Abdelrahman, 2004: 132-135).

Given this context, Al-Sayyid (1994: 288) argues that very few of the NGOs engage in confrontations with the State "over the question of autonomy or any other matter". In return for these favors, they maintain good relations with it. From that point, Abdelrahman (2004: 136, 137) furthers it suggesting that Islamic NGOs, some Coptic NGOs and especially advocacy groups have often challenged co-optation by the State and especially the last group is often involved in "direct and fierce confrontations" with the State.

To sum up, although there has been a proliferation in the number and activities of the CSOs in Egypt during the last two decades, the restrictions over their activities still persist. While the Community

Development Associations have been given further freedom in practice due to their complementary role to the state's policies and operating in the fields that "are marginal to any contest for political power" (Al-Sayyid, 1994: 288), human rights/ advocacy organizations are those that have suffered the state control most. As Sullivan and Abed-Kotob (1999: 134) puts it

The result of such tight control over social and political activities, plus a limited liberalization of the economy, is a continuing authoritarian political system dominated by a single political party and backed by the national security organs. Rather than encouraging the generally peaceful and pluralistic organizations of civil society to function unfettered, and thus facilitating a peaceful channel for the venting of social and political grievances, the government strives to restrict and circumvent potentially participatory institutions. The remaining "space" left for civil society institutions and entrepreneurs (of a political, social, or economic bent) is limited at best, ephemeral at worst. But this space is not nonexistent.

3.3. The Re-Emergence of Women's Activism

Independent women's rights activism started to re-emerge in the end of the 1970s and witnessed a renewed visibility and rising of organizing efforts in the early 1980s (Badran, 1991: 225).

Ahmed (1998: 214) links the revival of women's independent activism to the ongoing battle over reforming the Personal Status Law as much as organizing of women around formerly taboo issues, such as contraception and clitoridectomy.

On the other hand, Nicola Pratt (2005: 139) argues that the failure of the past student movement of the '70s and the ideologies like Marxism and Nasserism to raise the woman question and address women's rights and problems caused women to form groups and then NGOs of their own. This tendency was strengthened by the disappointment of leftist women

in male activists' attitudes towards women's rights and "double standards imposed on them either by male fellow activists or their "progressive" fathers, brothers or husbands" (Al-Ali, 2000: 197).

Guenena and Wassef (1999: 51) add the impact of the UN Decade for Women that set women's agendas on the international scene to the government's failure to respond to women's basic needs, and the rise of Islamic movements that encouraged secular women to form organizations in order to counterbalance them.

Al-Ali (1997: 180) also underlines the impact of Islamic activism on the matter. She finds it important to note that rising Islamic revival, which was caused by Sadat's policy of using them to weaken the leftist forces, also caused women to get organized and mobilized.

According to Hatem (1992: 246-247; 1993: 30-34), one of the reasons was the close association between the official women's organizations and the regime, which resulted in that they were seen as the representatives of the regime instead of legitimate representatives of women. She also says that the United Nations' Decade for Women and programs under the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) encouraged the flurry of women's organizations and raised the concern on women's problems in Egypt as well as in the region. On the other hand, she touches on the Islamic revival and organizations among the reasons. She proposes that what encouraged middle-class women to get organized formally and informally was the state's decreasing support for the women's political representation. According to her, Islamists were the first to successfully organize women, especially on university campuses, into groups that provided social support and social services like free transportation, lecture notes and medical care. She argues that in response to the Islamic activism, middle-class "secular and feminist" women started to form formal and informal groups of their own beginning

from the late 1970s. The Women's Committee within the Reporters' Union was formed in 1979. The Federation for Progressive Women, affiliated with the Marxist, Progressive and Unionist Party, was founded in 1982. The Permanent Committee on the Conditions of Women of the Arab Lawyers' Federation was established in 1984. That year, the first unaffiliated non-governmental organization, *Bint Al-Ard* (Daughter of the Land) was established in Mansoura, in Lower Egypt.

The Daughter of the Land Group was formed by a number of women to protest the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon. Around this goal, their work had involved campaigning against Israeli invasion and fund-raising activities for its victims. However, they shifted the focus of their work from that particular area and extended their activities to women's issues, such as women's literacy, legal awareness, women's rights in Islam, raising awareness of young girls and rural women (Al-Ali, 2000: 77).²³

In the meantime, a number of educated women came together under the leadership of Nawal Al-Sa'dawi to form *Tadamun al-Mar'at al-Arabiyya* (the Arab Women's Solidarity Organization, AWSA).

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi emerged as the most outspoken feminist activist in Egypt in the 1970s and published books such as *Women and Sex* in 1971, which attacks the patriarchal control of female sexuality. She was the first to make such taboo issues as clitoridectomy, sexual abuse and the hypocrisy of prostitution public issues in Egypt. As an outspoken feminist, Al-Sa'dawi founded, in 1982, the AWSA, which was the first women's advocacy group to re-emerge (Al-Ali, 2000: 77).

²³ Azza Karam (1998: 129) says that they repeatedly applied to the MOSA for registration but the organization was denied registration each time for their openly political stand. At the time she interviewed Jihan Abu Zaid in 1994, the spokesperson for the *Bint Al-Ard*, they were still trying to gain legal status.

According to Al-Ali (2000: 76), Nawal Al-Sa'dawi and the forming of AWSA represented²⁴

The break from prevalent nationalist- and liberal- modernist discourses within Egypt. These discourses had only focused on women's rights in the public sphere as part of the process creating new modern societies. However, prevailing perceptions of women's rights were very closely tied to the modernist discourses of earlier male reformers, such as Qasim Amin, and the more recent development discourses...Women's rights within the "private", family sphere were not only ignored, but also considered as standing outside the legitimate struggle for *qadiyyat al-mar'a* (women's issues). During the post-*infitah* period these previously unchallenged premises on women's rights started to be challenged from various dimensions, even if they still constituted the most widespread interpretation of women's rights.

Like Al-Ali, with the new women's advocacy organizations to emerge, Pratt (2005: 140-141) also points to the break from "the depoliticization of women's issues" under the previous regimes. She proposes that in contrast to women's organizations concerned with providing services and charity, women's rights advocacy NGOs started to challenge the wider political and legal structures that inhibit women's participation in

²⁴ Although the AWSA represented a break from the former women's rights approach, some scholars point to the traditional way of rule in AWSA by Nawal Al-Sa'dawi (Al-Ali, 2000: 77, Hatem, 1992: 247), while Hatem (1992: 248) also criticizes it for its agenda and feminism: "Tadamun's agenda, and/or the approaches it uses to analyze the important issues, is superimposed on the Egyptian social map from the outside. For instance, there is more than article that question the marriage institution. One discusses why women are happier in love, but not in marriage, another discusses the desire to become mothers outside of the marriage institution, and a third equates marriage to slavery. While the critique of the marriage institution is not new in Egyptian women's writing, the idea of abandoning marriage to become single mothers and/or free women does not sound very Egyptian. (...) and they are not the burning issues around which one can mobilize Egyptian women. The same is true of the large space allotted to the critical discussion of cosmetics and fashion as alienated self-expression. (...) Finally, there are numerous condescending attacks on the veil and veiled women who do not understand the confrontations of their actions and how it reinforces women's inferiority. They are accused of not distinguishing between what is and what is not important in Islam. Al-Sa'dawi describes them as suffering from "false consciousness". These Westernized views and concerns distinguish upper-middle class and upper-class women from their counterparts who belong to the lower middle-classes.

political and social life as well as the patriarchal public-private division by making so-called private or family issues public.

AWSA linked the women's rights to wider economic, social and cultural system of domination. According to them, "the struggle for the liberation of Arab people and freedom from economic, cultural and media domination cannot be separated from the liberation of Arab women" (AWSA, 2007).

Although AWSA was established in 1982, it was refused a registration in 1983. In 1985, it acquired registration and the same year it was granted Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

In the meantime, in 1985 the High Constitutional Court reversed the decree that amended the Personal Status Law in 1979 and entitled women 30 parliamentary seats on the grounds that the laws passed by a presidential decree while there was no national emergency and Parliament was in session. It also struck down the 1979 electoral law that granted women 30 reserved seats in parliament because guaranteed seats for women contradicted the equality laid down in the Constitution and women had the same rights as men. On these grounds, the Court declared these laws unconstitutional (Hatem, 1994: 668, Hatem, 1992: 244).

Hatem (1992: 246) claims that the state welcomed this ruling because of the Islamist groups who entered Parliament in opposition in 1987 and of that it helped the state "to rid itself of the feminist mantle that was increasingly questioned by women in the many formal and informal groups".

This incident caused women to quickly organize and gave impetus to women's organizing efforts (Badran, 1991: 225). A Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Women and the Family was immediately established to lobby for passing of a new law addressing the same social needs as the 1979 one did (Hatem, 1992: 245, Pratt, 2005: 141). On the issue, Al-Ali (2000: 75) also calls attention to the different stances taken within the movement. On the one hand, there were women like Nawal al-Sa'dawi who defended to maintain it, on the other hand there were others like the *Ittihad al-Nissa'i al-Taquadummi* (Progressive Women's Union, affiliated with the Leftist Tagammu Party) who argue against it because it was passed unconstitutionally by Sadat.

In this debate nationalist leftist women, who opposed Sadat's policies of *infitah* and rapprochement with Israel, could be found arguing on the same lines as the Islamists and the Azhar who were enraged by the reformed Personal Status Law. This debate very clearly showed the "instrumentality" of women's issues and their submergence into broader political questions. What was at stake was not the actual substance of the issue, but a joint opposition against Sadat's general policies (Al-Ali, 2000: 76).

However, it did not take up a long time that the state made an attempt concerning the PSL just before a delegation of Egyptian women went to attend the International Women's Conference in Nairobi, marking the end of the U.N. Decade for Women. Within two months, a new law that restored some benefits that the former law had provided was passed on 2 July 1985. During this period, the state was caught between the Islamists, who wanted the Shari'ah implemented in all areas, and the international community (Al-Ali, 2000: 75, Hatem, 1992: 245).

Instead of allowing a confrontation to develop between the Islamists and women, which would have been disastrous both nationally and internationally, the state took the lead in suggesting a new watered-down personal status law to the People's assembly that would appease both (...) The new law, approved hastily on 2 July 1985, showed the state to be on the defensive retreating from the task of pushing for change in gender relations (Hatem, 1992: 245).

Under the new law, a wife may file for a divorce when her husband takes a second wife if she suffers from material or non-material harm which makes smooth marital relations within that class difficult. Even in this case, the judge determines if there is such harm and tries to reconcile the couple, if fails, grants her a divorce. In the case of a divorced mother's right to the family home, she can get it if her ex-husband fails to provide her and the children with housing within three months. In this area, the new law declined to recognize the unequivocal right of mother and children to their family home (Hatem, 1992: 245).

There were also attempts to raise women's awareness concerning their rights. In 1988, a group of women, who called themselves Group of Seven, came together to produce a booklet on the main laws related to women and their rights under international treaties and conventions ratified by the Egyptian state (Badran, 1991:226; Al-Ali, 2000: 164; Karam, 1998: 142). To produce the booklet, aimed at raising women's legal awareness, they began working from on 17 October 1987 by bringing together Egypt's intellectual figures, journalists, lawyers, social workers, academics, politicians, youth representatives, bankers and businessmen at a seminar. The booklet, *The Legal Rights of the Egyptian Woman: Between Theory and Practice*, was produced in 1988 based on the comments and suggestions made during this seminar (Karam, 1998: 142).

Also AWSA was organizing a number of seminars about women, holding international conferences once a year, and launched a campaign against the birth control methods used in Egypt (Badran, 1991: 225). However, AWSA was banned in June 1991 by the MOSA (Al-Ali, 2000: 79) without being given any specific reasons and without being informed until a month after this decision was taken.²⁵ But, Nawal al-Sa'dawi suspects

²⁵ Although it was closed down in Egypt, two branches of AWSA were established in Seattle and Washington respectively in 1994 and 1995. Only AWSA SF continues to

that the organization's opposition to the 1991 Gulf War and their critical stance of the government on the issue might be a reason (Sullivan, Abed-Kotob, 1999: 99). Ironically, AWSA's assets were confiscated and transferred to an Islamic NGO, the Women of Islam, whose director was the Director-General of Social Affairs in a district of Cairo (Abdelrahman, 2004: 137).²⁶

In other words, he was a government employee, working with the MOSA, the agency charged with overseeing (i.e., controlling) NGO activity. This incident smacks of corruption, conflict of interest, suppression of free speech and association, and state manipulation of private interests, in this case feminist and opposition activities (Sullivan, Abed-Kotob, 1999: 99-100).

Both Abdelrahman and Karam link the ban of AWSA to its openly political stance as well.²⁷ Abdelrahman (2004: 137) argues that it was an example of the state's intolerance of politically active NGOs. On the other hand, Karam (1998: 2) claims that it was also a warning to other organizations:

That the government, whilst allowing AWSA the status of an NGO after several years of failed attempts, denied the legitimacy of this association at the stroke of a pen, this warning all other outspokenly *political feminist* organizations- not to mention other political organizations with openly anti-government positions.

As Al-Ali (2000: 80) puts it, despite official pro-democracy policy of the Mubarak regime, women activists were the target of repressive

be active today and operates through listservs that connect Arab women and "their allies" internationally (Arab Women's Solidarity Association, 2007).

²⁶ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob (1999:100) reminds of dissolution of another women's organization in 1949, Zaynab al-Ghazali's Muslim Women's Association and they go on to argue that 'Thus, in confrontation between civil society and the state, it has been unusual for the state to ban organizations with which it disagrees, whether secular, as was AWSA, or religious, as was the Muslim Women's Association. Both met with the wrath of the government because their activities were seen as threatening to the regime in power.

²⁷ From a different point, Al-Ali (1997: 179) proposes that Al-Sa'dawi's "autocratic rule" withing the organization alienated many, which made the organization an easy target besides its "outspokenly critical and confrontational feminism".

measures as well as Islamic militant groups and other advocacy NGOs. Since they have to operate under the Law 32 that leaves women either to register with the MOSA or establish informal groups to escape that control. However, “the level of control varies depending on the political climate. The influence of state power on civil society organizations through the Ministry of Social Affairs and the apparent randomness with which organizations are allowed to operate is being restrained by the international arena”.

During the preparations to the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (September, 1994) and the International Women’s Forum in Beijing (September, 1995) the influence of the international community became more apparent and pressing (Al-Ali, 1997: 181).²⁸

ICPD provided the Egyptian women activists with an opportunity to meet and discuss with activists from all over the world. The preparation itself created space by bringing women of different backgrounds together to discuss formerly taboo issues such as abortion, violence against women, reproductive rights as well as laws concerning women’s rights and equality (Al-Ali, 2000: 195). However, women activists had troubles accessing the Beijing Conference. That the government and the

²⁸ Pratt (2005: 127) explains this in the scope of “hegemony”: “Moreover, in today’s world of global communications and international migrations, hegemonic discourses within one nation state cannot exist impervious to the discourses in other parts of the world. For example, Egyptian government officials must now include concepts of gender empowerment and women’s rights in their discourses because of the widespread use of these concepts at United Nations conferences (including the International Conference on Population and Development hosted by Egypt in 1994). Nevertheless, these concepts are not reproduced in the Egyptian governmental context in the same form that they are originally produced in other locations. The government inserts these concepts into the hegemonic discourse in such a way as not to challenge it. However, by acknowledging the existence of these concepts, the regime opens the way for challenges to the hegemonic discourse by those from within civil society, such as advocacy NGOs, who define alternative meanings for these concepts and who perceive the dislocations within the hegemonic discourse brought about by these alternative meanings”.

nominated organizing committee headed by Hoda Badran insisted that only the NGOs registered with MOSA attend it caused the exclusion of some groups (Al-Ali, 2000: 195, 206). That way, not only did the government prevented those “who had proved most threatening earlier during the ICPD”, it also created tensions and conflicts between women activists since those with government approval were given the money and resources (Karam, 1998: 155).

Not only did the international constituencies cause the Egyptian government feel pressured to prove its commitment to women’s rights, but also did it have an impact on the flurry of the women’s activism during the last two decades, with new demands on women’s political rights and women’s rights at work, and formerly taboo issues such as women’s reproductive rights and violence against women. Moreover, there appeared some groups formed around funding possibilities created after those conferences ended (Al-Ali, 1997: 181).

As mentioned, Female Genital Mutilation or female circumcision was put on the Egyptian women’s groups’ agendas during the preparation for the ICPD in 1994 (Al-Ali, 2000: 167). Under the National NGO Commission for Population and Development, the FGM Task Force headed by Marie Assaad was established in October 1994. The FGM Task Force began with an advocacy group, a grassroots mobilization group and a research group to create mobilization, research, documents and reports on FGM (Guenena and Wassef, 1999: 63; Zuhur, 2001).

FGM Task Force moved with the momentum created by the domestic and international coverage. After denying the practice repeatedly, when CNN broadcast female circumcision in Egypt, the government felt compelled to make promises to the international community due to the controversy generated. However, conservative groups, who claim that the practice was Islamic, were angered by those statements and

promises. The government, who did not want to alienate these groups either, found a solution in between again. In 1996, the Minister of Health issued a decree that allowed FGM to be practiced only by medical doctors. Soon after that, women's groups and NGOs formed a pressure group against the decree that legalized the practice in hospitals (Al-Ali, 2000: 167-168). In December 1997, by the latest decree, after all revokes and court decisions and reactions shown by the Islamists, FGM is banned in all government hospitals and clinics unless it is "needed" (Guenena and Wassef, 1999: 63).

Within this context, the relations between the actors that shape women's issues are explained by Al-Ali (2000: 85) as follows:

In the 1990s the state and pro-feminists have increasingly had to take into account Islamist social and political activism, discourses and demands. Meanwhile, agents of globalization, i.e. the international constituency of policy-makers, development agencies and UN-related organizations, also shape contemporary women's activism.

From the late 1980s to the mid of the 1990s there emerged many women's organizations such as *Al-Mar'a Al-Gedida* (The New Woman's Group), *Rabat Al-Mar'ah Al-Arabiya* (The Alliance for Arab Women), *Gamaiyat Al-Tanmiya Wa Al-Nuhud Al-Mar'ah* (The Association for the Development and the Enhancement for Women), *Ma'an* (Together), in addition to the professional organizations such as *Lagnat Al-Mar'a fi Ittihad Al-Mohameen Al-'Arab* (Women's Committee of the Arab Lawyers' Union), *Gama'iyat Al-Katibat Al-Masriyat* (the Egyptian Women Writers' Association), *Dar Al-Mar'a Al-'Arabiyya Nour* (the Arab Women Publishing House Nour), and *Gama'iyat Al-Sinmai'iyat* (the Egyptian Women in Film Society) and those who are affiliated to political parties such as *Ittihad Al-Nissai' Al-Taqaddummi* (Progressive Women's Union) and *Lagnat Al-Mar'a fil Hizb Al-Nasser* (the Women's Secretariat of the Arab Democratic Nasserist party)(Al-Ali, 1997: 182; Al-Ali, 2000: 10-11).

In the late 1990s and beginning of 2000s, two events are of particular significance in displaying the regime's approach towards women's NGOs.

In 1996, a new NGO, The League of Egyptian Women Voters or named after Hoda Sha'rawi as HODA, was established with the help of Ibn Khaldun Centre to help Egyptian women to overcome the bureaucratic obstacles to register to vote and headed by Amina Shafiq. However, after the Ibn Khaldun Center was closed down in July 2000, HODA was also closed down and its files were confiscated (Sakr, 2004: 164).

Another noteworthy event was the women's rights activists' efforts to establish a union. In 1999, a group of women's rights activists including Nawal Al-Sa'dawi applied to form a union of women's NGOs in Egypt. However, they were warned by a MOSA official that their meetings were illegal, and they were refused a permit for the union since there had already been a union of women's private voluntary associations (Sakr, 2004: 163).

In brief, it can be said that to the beginning of 2000s, Egyptian women's NGOs have continued to work in an environment where extensive restrictions are placed on their activities, foreign funding as well as their organizing efforts in creating a unified movement. Moreover, as Sullivan and Abed-Kotob (1999, 117) puts it, they are penalized by the state "if they transgress the threshold of tolerable opposition to the state".

3.4. Steps Taken by the State

Under Mubarak, the state has taken noteworthy steps regarding laws and the establishment of a national women's machinery. When the pace of the progress made in these fields in Egypt so far is considered, it can be said that they should be particularly examined.

3.4.1. Laws

Laws are important tools of change and constitute an important struggle field for women's organizations. In Karam's (1998: 23-24) words:

As far as the relationship between women and the state is concerned, (...) states incorporate facts of social power in societies in the form of law. In most state regimes, law is a particularly potent source and badge of legitimacy. Hence law is a site of power whilst being the arena through which power is exercised. Law is both a tool of oppression as well as of liberation, but in either case it is an instrument of political power. In both cases, the agency of women vis-à-vis the state (and vice versa) is critical.

In addition to the conflicts between the women's groups and the state in the field of freedom of association in Egypt, debates have emerged around the laws in the last decade as well.

After the campaign around the PSL resulted in a new one of compromise between the Islamists, the state and the women activists, the efforts to improve women's status in this field were concentrated only on a specific aspect of the PSL, that is, on the Marriage Contract (Al-Ali, 2000: 165).

In Egypt, the fact that although both parties could include any conditions for marriage beforehand, women could not stipulate any conditions in the marriage contract motivated a group of women activists to draft a New Marriage Contract (NMC), which lists an array of possible demands such as the right to work, right to travel or the right to file a divorce. That way the process was intended to be simplified for women who were supposed to just indicate the appropriate sections. Although women's groups co-operated with Al-Azhar to draft it, the NMC created a great deal of controversy (Al-Ali, 2000: 166; Karam, 1998: 145-146) among those who think that it would lead to the disintegration of the family and an increase in the number of divorces (Guenena and Wassef, 1999: 44).

However, on January 29th, 2000 the Parliament passed amendments to the Personal Status Law. Under the new law, in addition to forming of family courts to facilitate divorce cases, women's right to travel without their husband's consent is recognized. Moreover, women are granted the right to initiate a divorce, *Khulaa*, on any grounds as long as they return the groom's gifts and jewelry and dowry payments (Zuhur, 2001). In this regard, "the new law moved in the direction of redressing inequality between men and women in Egypt in the field of divorce" (Sakr, 2004: 166).

Another controversial law for women activists was the Nationality Law. For many activists it was a source of inequality and discrimination. In its previous form, Egyptian women could not pass on their Egyptian nationality to their children while the children of an Egyptian father were granted the citizenship automatically (Karam, 1998: 166; Al-Ali, 2000: 155). This law was amended in 2004 to provide the children of Egyptian mothers with foreign fathers with the Egyptian nationality as well (National Democratic Party, 2007).²⁹

Another area that women's groups identified as problematic was the ban that prevented women from being judges. In that field women's groups argued that women should not be excluded from this profession "which require male characteristics like rationality and lack of emotion" (Karam, 1998: 144). However, as part of the steps "to empower women in all walks of life", in January 2003, for the first time in Egypt's history a woman was appointed as judge (National Democratic Party, 2007). Eventually on 14 March 2007 the Supreme Judicial Council, the country's highest legal authority, appointed 31 female judges (Human Rights Watch Press Release, 2007).

²⁹ The only exception to the law applies to the Egyptian women married to Palestinians. They cannot pass on the Egyptian nationality to their children (Khafagy, 2007).

3.4.2. National Council for Women

In March 2000, a National Council for Women (NCW) was established with a presidential decree numbered 90, with Suzanne Mubarak as President and Merwat Tallawy as Consul General. In fact, there were some attempts at establishing a national women's machinery in line with the UN initiated call for them in the 1970s. The first one was established in the 1970s, a Women's Affairs Directorate inside the MOSA, and it was followed by a National Committee for Women, formed in 1993 due to the push by the UN for stronger mechanisms. In 2000, this was replaced with the National Council for Women, which is a stronger mechanism granted more authority and funds within the government's budget (Khafagy, 2007).

According to its mission statement (National Council for Women, 2007),

NCW aims to enhance the status of all Egyptian women and to maximize their contribution to the growth and development of Egypt. The focus is on narrowing existing socio-economic gender gaps and addressing women's strategic needs including social, economic and political empowerment.

To do that, the NCW has a broad mandate granted by its founding decree, including those as follows (National Council for Women, 2007):

- a. To propose public policy matters for society and its constitutional institutions on development and empowerment of women to enable them to play their economic role, and to integrate their efforts in comprehensive development programs.
- b. To draft a National Plan for the advancement of women and to solve their problems.
- c. To monitor and evaluate the general policies related to women and formulate its recommendations and observations to the concerned parties.

- d. To advise on the draft laws and decrees related to women before submission to the competent authorities. Recommend the adoption of proposed laws and decrees that contribute to reinforcing the enhancement of women status.
- e. To advise on all agreements relating to women.
- f. To represent women in international fora and organizations dealing with women's issues.
- g. To establish a documentation center, collect information, data and research on women, and to conduct related research and studies.
- h. To hold conferences, seminars, symposia and debates on women's issues.
- i. To organize training sessions to raise awareness of the role, rights and duties of women.
- j. To publish newsletters, magazines and other publications informing the public of the goals and functions of the Council.
- k. All other issues referred to the Council by the President of the Republic.

Moreover, the National Council for Women runs projects and programs to empower female heads of households, small grants projects, women's business development center, health care programs, literacy programs, media watch unit, and programs on women's political participation.

In its organizational structure, it has an ombudsman office to receive women's complaints, branches in 26 governorates and eleven standing committees such as Education, Training and Scientific Research Committee, Health and Population Committee, Non-Governmental Organizations Committee, Culture Committee, Economic Affairs Committee, Political Participation Committee, External Relations Committee, Governorates Committee, Legislative Committee, Media and Information Committee, Environment Committee. As it is seen, one of the committees is devoted to NGOs tasked with activating the role of

NGOs, monitoring and evaluating their efforts, submitting proposals and recommendations to enhance their roles and supporting their roles, meeting their needs, raising their awareness about their rights and duties (National Council for Women, 2007). However, the strongest feminist NGOs are not represented in this committee although they are invited to council events on some occasions. Moreover “The NCW-NGOs relationship is not formalized; procedures and channels of dialogue are not clear” (Khafagy, 2007).

On the other hand, although the NCW helped change Nationality Law and initiate *Khulaa* and family courts, The NCW’s ability to influence government policies is limited due to lack of a national consensus on women’s issues and its close ties with the government. Its success requires working inside the state, but sometimes not in accordance with state policies. Unfortunately, the NCW is reluctant to criticize other governmental institutions, or to demand change of some of their gender discriminatory practices (Khafagy, 2007).

CHAPTER 4

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE WOMEN'S NGOs AND STATE

In this chapter, I will briefly introduce the women's NGOs which constitute the sample of this research. Then, in the second section, I will analyze the cooperation among them. In the third and fourth sections, opinions of the interviewees on the women's problems in Egypt and their demands from the state will be examined respectively. In the fifth section, relations between the state and the selected women's NGOs will be examined based on the interviewees' reports on the confrontations and problems they experienced with the state and MOSA in specific. In the sixth section, I will present the evaluation of the interviewees about the NCW, and the co-operation between them.

4.1. Information on the Selected Women's NGOs

4.1.1. Women and Memory Forum

Women and Memory Forum (WMF) is a research institution originally founded in 1995 and registered in 1997. It then re-registered with MOSA as a foundation in 2003 in accordance with NGO Law 84/2002. It consists of thirty members in total with an Advisory Board and associate researchers.

WMF focuses on women mainly in the Arab history to research and rewrite women's history from women's perspective. In other words, as my interviewee puts it, they "use the history as a tool to change the dominant regressive image of women in the society".

They express themselves as follows:

WMF consists of a group of women researchers and development practitioners concerned about the negative representations and perceptions of Arab women in the cultural sphere. Dominant cultural ideas and images of Arab women constitute major stumbling blocks in the course of women's development and attainment of their rights. We believe that one of the main obstacles facing Arab women now is the scarcity of alternate cultural information and knowledge about the role of women in history and the present day. We decided to organize formally in order to advocate for and promote the integration of gender as a category of analysis in the study and interpretation of Arab history and the social sciences in general. The long-term objective of our specialized research is to produce and make available alternate cultural information about Arab women that can be used for raising awareness and empowering women (Women and Memory Forum, 2007).

WMF has carried out conferences, publications, film shows, workshops, collecting of women's oral history, commemorative conferences on pioneer Egyptian women and re-writing of fairytales through a women's perspective to challenge the prevalent representation of women.

They rely on foreign funding to carry out their activities, which comes from such international organizations as German Development Agent in Egypt, Ford Foundation, CEDA, Mama Cash. However, by principle, they don't accept funds from organizations that are state-connected, like embassies.

4.1.2. The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) is an NGO established in September 1996 to improve the human and political status of women in Egypt and in the Arab region, and registered in 2002 with

MOSA again. In addition to the main office, they have another office for legal aid in Giza.

The ECWR stresses “the importance of women's participation in public life as an activist, voter and candidate, as well as developing women's legal and political awareness and pushing for legislative change”.

The ECWR carries out activities based on the belief that women's rights are an integral part of human rights. Through their programs, they aim at monitoring the laws and legislation that restrict women's rights and finding ways to challenge and amend them; providing legal assistance and legal counsel to women; developing women's rights to participation in public life, particularly the right to vote and run in the elections; helping women register in electoral records and obtaining ID cards.

They have conducted activities such as Arab Women's Forum which is aimed at bringing women activists from the region together to train them in advocacy and dialogue on the political and social status of women to be able to confront discrimination against women; Women's Cadre School Program, which focuses on seminars and trainings aimed at preparing women to run in parliamentary and local council elections; Small Initiatives Program, which is designed to enhance the capacity of small NGOs in order to better serve their local communities and to extend greater economic opportunities for marginalized women; Access to Basic Services Access to Basic Services program, which addressed the problem of unregistered women who cannot access government, legal or NGO services; and Training of Trainers for Youth Leaders. After I left Egypt, the ECWR started the first campaign in Egypt to stop sexual harassment in Egypt.

The ECWR also receives foreign funding to carry out the activities from such organizations as MEPI, Konrad Adaneur, Dutch and Finish

Embassies, American Funds, EU, World Bank, Open Society Institute. Although they don't take a hard line about it, they note that international funding may have negative sides, for instance, "you may have to comply with their priorities and then change yours to get funds". Lastly, they don't receive funding from Israel "because of their policies towards Palestinians".

4.1.3. The Center for Egyptian Women Legal Aid

The Center for Egyptian Women Legal Aid (CEWLA) was established in 1995 as a civil company by four lawyers and re-registered in 2003 under the new law as an NGO. In order to be close to and help the most marginalized women, the CEWLA is located in one of the poorest areas in Cairo, Boulaq.

It aims to provide Egyptian women with legal assistance and support regarding their rights under the Egyptian laws and international conventions. They work on the issues such as women's rights in the Personal Status Law, discrimination against women in the laws, to change discriminatory laws and help women with legal cases especially concerning divorce, domestic violence, rape, FGM.

They mainly provide legal services and legal counseling to women, conduct literacy and continuous education classes, help them with issuing of ID and voting cards. At a larger scale, they hold roundtables with media workers and members of the Parliament about discriminative laws; organize conferences and workshops for NGO activists and lawyers. Through these activities, they aim to change the status of women and laws in Egypt especially in the field of Personal Status Law. There is also a telephone hotline offered by them to which people can ask questions and receive legal advice. In addition, they have a computer center which is for a small amount of fee.

They do receive foreign funding for their activities from several organizations but USAID and those from Israel. The organizations they get funding are Netherlands, Ford Foundation, Global Fund for Women, Equality Now, open Society Institute, World Bank, USA Embassy, Finish Embassy.

4.1.4. The Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women

The Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women (ADEW) is a feminist, voluntary, non-governmental organization established in 1987. It originally grew out of a micro-credit project for women-headed households at the Mokattam Garbage Collectors from 1985 to 1987. As they recognized the importance of empowering female heads of households in the course of the project, this group of twenty men and women development professionals established the ADEW. In their own words:

ADEW believes that the status of Female Heads of Households, a traditionally neglected and disempowered segment of Egyptian society, can only be enhanced through social, legal and economic empowerment. By providing women with economic opportunities and working as mediators between women and various governmental and private agencies, ADEW delivers women's voice to the national consciousness (Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women, 2007).

In this field, it was first of its kind in Egypt. ADEW has now twelve offices in Cairo, Qalyubeya, and Gharbeya with 200 members.

ADEW works at two levels; grassroots level and advocacy level. At the grassroots level, ADEW delivers an array of direct services to the poor women in Egypt. It provides women with micro-credit loans, legal aid, literacy classes, health seminars and empowerment workshops. At the

advocacy level, ADEW works on raising awareness of the problems faced by the most marginalized women and trying to influence policies and changing attitudes. To do that, it disseminates flyers, periodicals, posters, and documentaries, and also does advocacy, organizes conferences, training seminars and workshops.

They have conducted such programs and projects as Microfinance Program, which focuses on the concept of 'peer lending' instead of on collateral that requires a male guarantor or collateral; Legal Assistance and Awareness Program, which is aimed at helping women obtain official documents like ID cards, and teaching them their legal rights, counseling women and filing court petitions on their behalf; Health Program, which is designed to address the problems relating to early marriage and childbirth at a young age, FGM and reproductive health through the seminars held by medical doctors in women's homes; Literacy Program; Girls Dreams Program, which is designed to acquaint adolescent girls with their peers, improve their self-image, and provide them with basic life skills training, and provide a forum for them to come together and discuss their issues; Shelter Program: House of Eve, which is aimed at supporting women and children who suffer from domestic violence.

They finance their activities through membership fees and mainly foreign funding. They receive funds from Ford Foundation, GTZ German, Global Fund for Women, Open Society Institute, Finish and Japanese Embassies, British Council. They do not accept funds from USAID and USA Government since they "don't believe in their international policies" and do not like their approach in imposing their own projects.

4.1.5. The New Woman Foundation

The New Woman Foundation (NWF) was founded in 1984 as an informal group. The group was consisted of five women who met regularly to discuss women's problems, international feminist movement, and Arab and Egyptian women's movement. Then in 1991 it was registered as a civil company called New Woman Research Center. After the new law of Associations of 2002, it was registered as foundation with the Ministry of Social Affairs under the name of New Woman Foundation. They have around thirty members.

In their own words (NWF, 2005):

NWF believes in women's unconditional right to freedom, equality and social justice and that women's social, political, economic, citizenship and reproductive rights are an integral part of human rights. As it also believes that the struggle for women's rights cannot be separated from the struggle of nations and people for justice from global oppression and violence. ...NWF believes that the struggle for women liberation is part of a wider struggle for democracy and social justice and against all forms of discrimination based on gender, class, race, ethnicity, or religion, and against all oppressive power relations... NWF believes in the need for cooperation between like-minded women's and human rights organizations to formulate their own independent organizational tools with the goal of creating a powerful Egyptian women's movement, an integral component of an Egyptian democratic-civil movement.

NWF's work includes such activities as issuing magazines and books, organizing workshops and seminars, networking with local, regional and international women's rights organizations, research on women's perceptions of their community, their position and rights, women's reproductive rights, women and Islam, impact of structural adjustment policies on women, violence against women, women in the NGOs, and the Arab Women's Movement.

NWF can be called the most radical women's organization in Egypt. They openly call themselves "feminist" that most of others decline to. Furthermore, it is one of few Egyptian women's organizations to work on controversial issues such as FGM, violence against women, coerced sex within marriage, the so-called 'honor' crimes and abuse of domestic servants.

Of the women's organizations I interviewed, NWF appears as the only one that complies most with feminist horizontal structure of organizing. The founding members and older activists encourage younger activists to participate in decision-making at all levels and all the decisions are made together.

They do not want to work with USAID and other governmental organizations. They receive funding from NOVIB (Dutch), British Reproductive Health Matters.

4.1.6. The Alliance for Arab Women

The Alliance for Arab Women (AAW) is a voluntary organization established in 1987 and registered with MOSA. It has a consultative status with the UN ECOSOC. It has about 200 members, men and women, and acts as an umbrella organization to around 350 organizations, with one NGO in each governorate as a focal point.

AAW works within the framework of human rights in an integrated fashion. It supports Arab women to exercise their human rights with a priority to poverty groups. It addresses poverty as multi-dimensional phenomenon correlating with education, health and public participation.

AAW carries out projects in the fields of poverty, public participation, violence, health and education to provide women with “basic human security” through influencing policies and legislations and providing relevant services. They work on TV commercials, social security, birth control, ID Cards, training women candidates and quota system in parliament. They have carried out projects such as Enchanting Employment Chances for Egyptian Women in the New Millennium Project, which is aimed at raising the quality of life of 1800 female-headed households through gainful employment; Comprehensive Development for Egyptian Women Project, which is designed to train and raise awareness of 200 women in Kalyubia governorate; Women in Decision-making Process Project, which aims to support women in decision making structure all over Egypt (as representatives, candidates and voters) through advocacy, awareness raising, upgrading skills, building allies, publications and studies, assisting the beneficiaries in issuing voting and identity cards, encouraging and joining political parties, running for elections and acquiring relevant skills; Resisting Violence Against Women Network Project designed to establish an electronic sub-network of NGOs in four governorates to influence the ministries concerned and advocate changes in policy legislation and programs; projects related to education that focus on help school enrolment of children, reduce drop out rates, revive extra curriculum activities, and reduce illiteracy rates.

They have membership subscription fees and funds from international donors such as Swiss Fund, Dutch Embassy, British Embassy, USAID, European Commission, Global Fund for Women, Lions, and UNIFEM to finance their activities.

4.1.7. The Young Christian Women Association

The Young Christian Women Association (YCWA), which is affiliated with the worldwide YCWA, was established in Egypt in the 1920s. They aim to “serve one another by love”. They have 500 members and four branches in Cairo, Alexandria, Assiut, Minia.

The YCWA is a service-oriented NGO. They conduct activities to help different segments of the society in need. They have a youth hostel, special programs for the handicapped children, free meals projects for those who cannot afford, mother and child care center, library in Shoubra, summer camps in Alexandria, computer center for blinds and a building for the handicapped.

On the financial level, they rely on membership fees, donations, annual bazaars, funding from MOSA and the worldwide YCWA.

4.1.8. The Egyptian Women and Development Association

The Egyptian Women and Development Association was established in 1990 and registered with MOSA in 2002. It has 65 members and is based in Cairo with no branches.

The Egyptian Women and Development Association aims to help fresh graduates by training them especially in computers, to help them take part in society and get jobs in a number of organizations included in their network.

Their main activity is the computer training. In their well-advanced computer center, every three months they train 200 women. They, at the same time, train these young women on their rights, political participation, education and human rights. On another level, after

training them in computer and English skills, they try to give them jobs in the companies and other organizations in their network or at government. They also organize conferences that focus on women's rights, how to raise their self-confidence, how to be an active member in the society, held by experts from different fields- social, political and religious.

They fund their activities through membership subscriptions, donations (like PCs), courses. They receive funding from the Ministry of Information and Technology (in kind, like computers), European Union and the US Embassy as well.

4.1.9. The Women and Society Association

The Women and Society Association was established in 1996 and registered with MOSA as NGO. In addition to their main office, they have a Medical Center and Business Center in Giza.

The Women and Society Association aims to empower women and promote child rights.

They organize trainings for women on computer, sewing, handicrafts and help them sell what they produce by organizing bazaars or finding places. They also have a project called Social Participation for Support and Develop Basic Education, which is designed to make primary education better in poor areas through training teachers on how to teach and deal with children; they establish facilities in schools such as laboratories etc.

Women and Society Association also is a member of Arab Network for Literacy and Other Education that works in cooperation with UNICEF to help women and girls.

They fund their activities through membership subscriptions and donations, income generated through their medical center and computer courses as well as UNESCO, UNICEF and Swiss Fund.

4.1.10. The NGO Forum for Women in Development

The NGO Forum for Women in Development was established as a civil firm in 1996 and then re-registered as NGO in 2001 because of the difficulties created by the state in getting funds and organizing activities for civil firms. They have 21 members including men.

NGO Forum for Women in Development aims to eliminate the discrimination against women in Egyptian society, have solidarity and raise the communication among the women NGOs, change the image of women in multi-media, and increase women's publications in the libraries.

They have four main committees: Documentation Committee provides NGOs and students with required information, publications, and bibliographies (women's thesis, of women intellectuals); Media Committee to communicate with other partners, to issue a magazine called Anhar, produce films (testimony of female peasants), and an agenda for CEDAW-with short information; Training Committee to raise the capacity of NGO staff in any field, and Legal Committee that prepares programs regarding existing laws and changing them.

They rely on foreign funding for the activities however my interviewee notes that they 'try to read any hidden agendas', and sees it as their "right from Europeans, they take a lot from our country and from other Arab countries". The organizations they receive funding are OXCAM, Friedrich Evans, and UNICEF. They don't accept funds from any American governmental organization and Israel.

4.1.11. The Helwan Institution for Community Development

The Helwan Institution for Community Development was established in 2004 and has three branches in Helwan.

The Institution aims to improve the economical situation of women, help them get ID Cards and personal papers, providing some jobs for women, and develop them through the courses on health.

They have programs such as nursery, training for adults, workshops, listening unit, legal consultation, ID and other cards, children club, activity learning class, literacy classes, workshops for handicrafts-sewing, knitting-, classes on women's rights.

Their income is based on workshop sells.

4.2. Co-Operation among the Organizations and Joint Campaigns

It is important for women's organizations to carry out joint campaigns and do advocacy work in influencing the state's policies and change laws. In order to see if Egyptian women's organizations work with each other to make a change against the state, interviewees were asked if they collaborate with each other.

According to the reports of them, a coalition of women's organizations including the Women and Memory Forum, NWF, ADEW, AAW, ECWR with nine other organizations have celebrated the International Women's Day for ten years. However, an interviewee from the NWF says that NCW "co-opted it"; they hold their own meetings on the same day and do not collaborate with NGOs with different stands, like the NWF.

Also more than one hundred NGOs, both women's NGOs and others, came together and created a coalition to produce CEDAW shadow reports a few years ago. They successfully wrote one and submitted it to the Committee. However, the Coalition collapsed afterwards due to the lack of funds. In fact, the funds and support provided for them by some UN agencies like UNICEF and UNIFEM were withdrawn from NGO Coalition to support the governmental report, that is, the one produced by the NCW. As I see, now there is a division between the women's NGOs and each of them tries to write reports of their own.

In addition to the abovementioned activities, they come together for the elections as they did in the last parliamentary elections held in 2005. A number of women's organizations worked together to support women candidates, and encourage the participation of women in politics through trainings and putting pressure on the government and the ruling party. However, the number of the women candidates nominated by the Egyptian political parties remained insignificant.

Besides the campaigns at the advocacy level, women's organizations work with each other on project basis. They can also collaborate with smaller local NGOs to outreach women in the countryside. For instance, the ECWR worked with a number of small NGOs for the Small Initiatives Project.

While the interviewees usually express that they maintain good relations with other women's organizations, two of them said that they may have problems. One of them, who is from the NWF, says that because of their radical stand in the past some organizations like the AAW didn't want to work with them, but now things are going better; and the other from the ADEW says that relations between them do not go smoothly always because of both sides and lack of a culture supportive of co-operations.

4.3. Problems Egyptian Women Face from the Interviewees' Perspective

In this section, I will explain the problems Egyptian women face based on the reports of the interviewees.

The responses given can be grouped as the traditions, problems related to political representation, feminization of poverty, sexual harassment, women's reproductive health, and the impact of religious forces.

A majority of the interviewees think that the major problem women face stems from the cultural attitudes and traditions. Eighteen of them link women's problems to the traditions, cultural structure or "old way of thinking" about women. Those women point to the fact that although there are no laws barring women from being judges, women cannot be judge because of the Egyptian culture.³⁰ In that sense, they think that there is a more prevalent discrimination in public attitudes than that in laws. Some of them also distinguish between the religion and culture in that it is traditions that prevent women from being involved in all areas of life, not religion. According to them, early marriages, women's exclusion from work life, sending boys to the school instead of girls are all from the cultural structure of Egypt. In this respect, the majority thinks that women are circumscribed by the traditions. On the other hand, some of these interviewees pay attention to the fact that it can be double-edged as one from ADEW says "laws give the women same rights as the men. That is why mentality should change. Also, they themselves don't see themselves being able to do what men do. Mentality on both levels should change".

³⁰ When this study was being carried out between September 2005 – January 2006, there were no female judges in Egypt. However, in March 2007, for the first time in Egypt, 31 female judges were appointed by the Supreme Council of Court.

An interviewee from NWF also expresses the role of traditions in women's suppression as below:

Traditional movements, more than Islamic movements: wearing a scarf-veil now is not a religious issue but traditional issue. If you are decent, you should take it up. Traditions about being educated; you must feel that you are inferior to men. Men should protect women, you can not ask for your rights, you can not force him. If you do that, you will have a lot of problems from your family. Especially working women have a big problem, they work and they come back home, they work as housewives. They are responsible for all without sharing. They must spend double effort.

An interviewee from the ECWR also puts emphasis on the traditions:

A lot of problems come from the tradition of women being associated with the home and family sphere, men being associated with the public sphere. I do not think it is bad thing to separate. In Egypt that goes through certain changes and the tradition creates barriers for women. Political participation, legal and social structure supporting women: a lot of laws that do not protect women. There is discrimination against women in employment. There are opportunities but people think that men should have the priority because they support the family.

When others tell about women's ignorance of their rights, another from Woman and Society also touches on the discriminatory practices in hiring as well as in the laws:

Sometimes they think that some jobs are not suitable for women; they think that women are not able to do more, to do best; important jobs are just for men. Most employers hire only men, not women. A woman can be secretary but not an engineer. Some laws, especially in the case of divorce and children's custody. In nationality law still they can not get the full nationality. In divorce, there is a system called Khulaa, it is better but not enough. She can get a divorce but after that she has to abandon all her claims.

An interviewee from New Woman society voiced the problem of identity in addition to democracy, poverty and conservatism:

We are always being intimidated about our identity, about being western agents. There are a lot of challenges about identity, you have to define it. (In our organization, we are lucky; we came from a political background, so nobody can question our political identity. So we can get through sensitive issues like rape, violence against women, abortion. We are not an enemy group to be attacked.) This is the real challenge still. Another is that feminism is being very much challenged by replacing the meaning of feminism. Essentializing of Islam is one thing, Islam is another, essentializing of the West is one thing, the West is another. It is like that.

This interviewee is the only one who voices identity problem that stems from being feminist. On the other hand, a veiled interviewee from AAW told about another side of the identity problem:

As a veiled woman, if you are veiled they treat you as if you were from another civilization. The government is against it; it is a political tempt. Even I had problems with this organization's founder (Hoda Badran) because of my veil. She criticized me for my veil.

Women's political representation is another area identified as problematic. It is clear from the interviews in general that this issue comes in second rank for women activists. Two of them think that there should be quota system to ensure more women in Parliament.

Although, sexual harassment in the streets of Egypt is a very serious problem, only two of them identified it as a problem; both of them are from the ECWR, one of whom is American:

Harassment in the street: I heard a lot of things: Women should be at home, it protects them from the evils of the world. Men do not feel that it is wrong (harassment/harasser men) because it is her choice being in the street.

Reproductive health and violence against women are mentioned among the problems women face in Egypt only by three interviewees, one is from the ECWR and the other is from New Woman Foundation. The one from AAW puts it as follows:

Violence against women, not having place in certain decision-making positions also can be considered a sort of violence. The old concept of traditions is not allowing women to practice her life as a wife at home and as a person on her own in public life. We already achieved some improvements last year, like custody of children, it is not an issue anymore. But we still have some area to improve, like domestic violence; to get women in some decision-making positions, be judges, political participation of women. There are 444 seats in the parliament and 4 women are elected. You have to change the culture, give more and more rights to women in social life.

As it is mentioned before, this research was conducted after the Parliamentary elections of 2005 were held in Egypt. In these elections, Muslim Brotherhood won over eighty seats in parliament. However, only four interviewees mentioned their presence in Parliament among the problems they can face due to possible barrier they can create in Parliament against changing conservative laws on women's issues. Similarly, the impact of the Islamist movements was mentioned by two interviewees, one is Nawal al-Sa'dawi and another is from CEWLA.

According to Nawal Al-Sa'dawi,

The challenge is to fight against the lies in the media, to create awareness, to unveil the mind; to link economic problems to sexual problems, to link women's problems to political and economic issues, to link FGM to American colonialism, to link American colonialism to the religious movements. Religious movements are encouraged by the USA and Mubarak. Some people say that America and Mubarak fight against religious movements but it is not true. They are two faces of the coin. Bush and Ladin are the faces of the same coin, they produce each other. We have to fight against contradictions, against Americanization and Islamization. If you walk by the Nile, you can see many veiled girls in tight jeans. Women are the victims of these contradictions.

The interviewee from CEWLA mentioned not only the impact of Islamists but also Christians:

Recently, religious attitude, Muslim's attitude is not good for future. They put pressure on women that they should be veiled; they refuse NGOs. It will be against our work because they try to push people backward. Laws are another problem, especially the Personal Status Law. Also, Church refuses to open a dialogue between us and them. They refuse to accept Christian women's rights to divorce.

The feminization of poverty³¹ is identified as a problem by two interviewees; one of them is from NGO Forum for Women in Development and the other is Nawal al-Sa'dawi.

4.4. Expectations from the State

In this part, I will explain the expectations of the interviewees from the state.

As mentioned before, the tools the state uses can be both a source of discrimination/domination and liberation. It has a huge power to shape and transform gender relations and constitutes a "site of struggle" and creates "opportunity spaces" for women's organizations (Waylen, 1998:15). In that sense, women's organizations work against the state as well as they work to make it mobilize its sources to improve women's status. Therefore, it is important to find out what women want the state to do.

Within this framework, interviewees were asked the question "What role do you expect from the state to play?" to analyze what women's organizations expect from the state.

³¹ "The feminization of poverty" refers to the perception around the globe that poverty is becoming increasingly feminized, that is, that an increasing proportion of the world's poor are female since the 1980s. The factors behind women's poverty are the expansion of female-headed households, the persistence and consequences of intra-household inequalities and bias against women and girls, and the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies around the world (Moghadam, 2005).

In response to this question, interviewees usually point to the need to change / improve the representation of women in media and school curriculum. From the interviews, it becomes clear that many women activists feel bothered with the way women are represented in media. They think that stereotypes about women and their roles defined in private sphere in media and school curriculums contribute to the inferior position of women in society. What they expect from the state is to take action against this problem since it has power and tools to do so. However, one of them points out that what she expects is not the control of media by the state, but just preventing them by laws from strengthening these stereotypes: "I do not want the government to control the media. But I want a free media which can create free space for women".

On the other hand, some of them say that there should be more laws to protect women's rights, especially regarding the divorce and guaranteed jobs. Although women were granted the right to divorce without a reason, they have to abandon all their claims in this case. That's why, these women activists call for women's rights to divorce without giving up their demands. However, only a couple of them expressed the need to mainstream gender in each policy of the state. Three interviewees also acknowledged the need that the state should amend all the laws in line with the CEDAW removing all its reservations, and ratify the Optional Protocol.³²

When it comes to conservative laws, an interviewee from New Woman Foundation calls attention to the instrumental use of women's rights by the state: "I want the state to support, protect and fulfill-abide by the

³² Egypt signed the CEDAW in 1980 and ratified it in 1981. However, it made reservations to Article 9(2) on gender equality in acquiring nationality, which was removed afterwards, and Article 16, which stipulates that women and men should have equal rights in marriage and divorce, Article 2 concerning ensuring the equality between sexes. The last reservations are based on the status of Sha'ria which governs marital relations in Egypt and cannot be called in question (Emory Law School, 2007).

Convention. Laws should not be the part of discriminative power; they should not compromise for women's rights for political reason (with conservative demands)."

On the other hand, some of the interviewees say that there are enough laws to ensure equality for women. However, according to them, the problems stem from their implementation. At this point, they say that the state should ensure their proper implementation and monitor it. An interviewee from the AAW emphasizes the need to implement laws properly through some specific cases as below:

There are laws enough but there is a problem of monitoring or implementing them. There are laws saying that everyone should have ID cards, should be registered, or prohibiting early marriages. Also there is a problem with judges. There was a case a few years ago. A guy took a girl to his office saying that he would help her with finding a job. Then he raped girl with a friend of his. She had health problems with her heart. Although she told it they didn't pay attention and she had a heart attack and died. He took just a three-year imprisonment. Sometimes law is there but it is not implemented properly. The state should be firm to stop this kind of things. There is a law prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation, but implementation of this law is problem. Also, stereotypes in books is another problem. Even in the educational, governmental books you can find this differentiation. Educational system should be revised from the first. Even while teaching Islam, they frighten children instead of focusing on good aspects, good examples of Islam. State has to implement these changes in the Ministry of Education. Media should change attitudes towards women. If state uses the tools, that is, ministries, to implement change, then everything will change.

Regarding laws, an interesting answer comes from an interviewee from Women and Society Association, who says the laws should be amended to make sure that they are in line with the religious laws:

The laws should be changed according religions- they should not be away from the religion-, if they apply all these in religion, there will be no problem. We have French law. What is stated in the French law is suitable for them. Everyone has their own rule in their own religions. Changing

laws will change all other parts of women's life, like education, health, work. They will be equal. Because it comes from religion, from God, not from people's minds. So it will be more realistic. So it will be accepted by the people.

On the other hand, a group of the interviewees state that the State has a power to change society. According to them, the state should use its power to change society and direct this change. Even one of them, from the ADEW, said:

They should change the media, the pictures in the media about women; give her more rights, political rights, give her space to say what they want to say. After they change them, they can change the society to accept it as the main problem. Government has the main power to change them more than the CSOs have. If they give them more space, education, it would be better.

However, in that, an interviewee from the NGO Forum for Women in Development states her concern about the state's ambiguous approach:

The state has a major role, even if it doesn't play. In women's issue, actually the problem is not only with women, with men too. In an undeclared way, they challenge 'men' in Egypt; encourage them and religious men to have a demand of women back home again. To change their policies is what I expect.

Another group of women think that the state's role should be back up the NGOs in their work. According to them, the state should not interfere with what NGOs are trying to do, and work in line with them instead.

Following these views, another group of women wants to see women in high positions. They want the state to hire women in high-level positions. However, at this point, an interviewee from Women and Memory Forum points to the need to avoid a tricky issue:

I want them to change the laws drastically, not drop by drop, to ensure equality and to respect and to respond to civil society initiatives concerning progress in women's issues. Women's representation in state's institutions (in

Parliament, at universities- as rectors and deans- in high positions), not only as tokens or symbols.

In the interviews, it is seen that the women's problems are linked to wider democracy problem by some. For them, without a functioning democracy, women cannot be liberated and enjoy their rights. In order for them to enjoy their rights, there should be equality provided under a democratic government. At the same time they criticized the "dictatorship regime". As one of these interviewees from ECWR says "(...) A central issue is democracy. Women in democratic environment can be represented, can be heard but in this environment no one is respected, men or women".

Only a couple of the interviewees expressed the need for a shelter for women who are raped, homeless or suffer from violence.

Two interviewees said they have no idea.

4.5. Relations between the Women's NGOs and the State

To examine the relationship between the women's NGOs and their relationship with the state, the interviewees were asked the questions "Have you ever experienced a confrontation with the state during your activities of your CSO?" and "Is there any decision taken by the MOSA about your organization", "Has anybody from MOSA attended your board meetings?", "Do you have any MOSA seconded employee?" and "Do you get any assistance/funding from the state?". Through these questions, my aim is to explore what kind of confrontations take place between the women's organizations and the state, and which women organizations experience confrontations with the state and which of them do not as well as the reasons behind them.

Table 4.1. Relations with the State and Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA)

	Yes	No	No Idea
Is there any decision taken by MOSA about your organization?	3	5	3
Has anybody from MOSA attended your board meetings?	1	8	2
Do you have any MOSA seconded employee?	2	6	2
Do you get any assistance/ funding from the state?	2	7	2

According to the responses given by the interviewees, the range of the confrontations vary from serious ones to less significant problems which are caused by the restrictive laws or bureaucratic procedures that hinder or delay their activities.

The interviewees from the NWF, the CEWLA, the Helwan Institution for Community Development, and the ADEW expressed that they had serious confrontations with the state in the past during their activities. All of these organizations faced up with the danger of being dissolved or denied registration.

The NWF had a confrontation with the state in 2003 when they applied to re-register under the new law. As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, NGOs were required to re-register with the MOSA under the new Law of Associations no 84 of 2002. In June 2003, the NWF received a letter from deputy minister of the MOSA to inform that their registration was denied for “security reasons” which were not acknowledged in the letter. But the NWF members were then told that one of the founding members had been involved in political events in the 1970s. After the decision, all the organization’s activities were stopped by MOSA and NWF went to the court to appeal the decision. Under the pressure from well-known international human rights organizations and campaigns, and support from other Egyptian NGOs the court rejected the MOSA’s

decision not to register the NWF based on “unspecified” security reasons.

In addition to this very serious confrontation, interviewees from the NWF say that people from state security always “visit” them without an advance notice and check out all the documents and get some copies of them ‘in the hope that they can find something’ to close down the organization. In the words of a member they are “like cats chasing mice”.

Another interviewee from CEWLA tells about that “very bad experience” they had during the re-registration process after aforementioned law. When they applied to the MOSA for registration, they got refusal on security grounds, too. They were not given any specific reasons, either. Then “we talked to some government officials through personal relations and they helped us. They said that that we attended some demonstrations might be the reason”. They went to court to appeal the decision and after a year of struggle, they won the case and could receive approval from the MOSA to register again.

On the other hand, the example of Helwan Institution for Community Development shows that not only do the women’s advocacy NGOs with radical and political stands experience serious confrontations with the state; but service-oriented women’s organizations can be the object of the state’s persecution, too.

Helwan Institution for Community Development had a very similar experience with the CEWLA and the NWF during the registration of the organization. When they applied for a registration, they were not granted registration because they wanted to change some founding members “just to put obstacles”. Like other two organizations, they took the decision to the court and they won. During the case, people and NGO circles came to the court by special buses to support them.

A similar problem was experienced by the AAW. According to the report of an interviewee from the AAW, MOSA did reject a woman to serve on the organization's board. However, she went to court and won. Afterwards, she came back to the AAW to serve on the Board contrary to the prior decision.

Another serious problem with the MOSA was experienced by the ADEW. As an interviewee said, in 1996-1997 the MOSA was about to dissolve the ADEW because three board members decided to join a conference abroad and bought the tickets from the budget. But, according to the Law of Associations they had to take approval from the MOSA beforehand. They solved the problem by holding meetings with the MOSA after it revised all the papers. However, other interviewees from the same organization did not say anything about this incident, maybe due to the number years they have worked with the ADEW. Even one of them said that there is no decision about them "because they trust us as long as we are involved in development field and stay away from the politics". This answer puts the nature of MOSA intervention and the state's persecution against women's advocacy NGOs.

In addition to these very serious confrontations, other organizations have had difficulties or confrontations with the MOSA over funding or their projects. Most of these problems are caused by the Law of Associations and the bureaucratic procedures. The Law of Associations allows MOSA to restrict or prohibit the activities of the NGOs as well as to control over the foreign funding, which almost all women's organizations rely on. Most of the interviewees complain that the Law and these procedures, at the hands of MOSA, turn into a control/punishment mechanism and are used to hinder their activities.

What the Women and Society Association experienced can be considered an example of the restrictive use of the Law of Association.

The Women and Society Association had problems concerning one of their projects aimed at teaching kids computer. After they developed the project, they tried to “convince” the MOSA to grant approval for the project. However it was rejected three times. The reason given was that there were many similar associations with very similar projects on the same issue.

Another interviewee from the ECWR points to the fact that MOSA punishes NGOs through foreign funding by delaying that. That way, it is used as a form of control. As she explains:

We had confrontations with MOSA and the state security which we think of the same thing. They act together. For foreign funding, we have to get a written approval from them. They must give it in 60 days. For one of our application, they wanted to hold on some money. We argued a lot. It was funded by the different donors, some of which are connected to the US government and other is completely NGO. They refused to get approval for the one connected to the US government. We have been waiting since May or April. They know that no organizations can do anything just by raising the money in Egypt. The scale of the activities is big. It is form of control. They use the excuse of foreign interventions but it is a form of control the NGOs.

Another interviewee from the same organization also calls attention to the MOSA’s punishing NGOs through financial approach by adding that “There are some NGOs I know whose application for funds were not answered for months and they themselves closed down the organizations”.

An interviewee from the AAW also complains about the MOSA’s hindering of their activities and the intimidation by the state security:

MOSA always hinders our work. You are always looked as betrayers, thieves. You have a Project, you already write it, plan activities, contact donors, and find funds. They have to agree at least in 60 days, and you are not allowed to start anything before they give approval. Also the laws are not encouraging the NGOs. Police or government try to find

what is wrong in what you are doing. At our panels there are always police. They always try to avoid us meeting public and engaging in politics. Human rights and women rights NGOs are the most to suffer government approach.

An interviewee from NGO Forum for Women in Development points to the same problem of rejection and delay of some projects/ activities and overseas donors. While having had no confrontations, the rest of the interviewees pointed out that even though they had no confrontations, they are overwhelmed with delayed decisions for long periods of time and bureaucratic procedures to receive foreign funds. Sometimes, bureaucratic procedures can be to such an extent that some organizations may have to delay their activities as it is seen in the example of the Egyptian Women and Development Association, which had to delay all its activities since the approval for its registration under Law 84 was granted in 6 months.

As one of the organizations that has never experienced a confrontation with the MOSA, members of Young Christian Women Association say that since they “strictly obey the rules”, they had no serious problem or faced intervention. According to them “they (the state) interfere with some fundamentalist Islamist NGOs”. Also, an interviewee from YCWA said that the MOSA “knows that we are an active organization, they always do their best to help us”. Similarly, another interviewee from another service-oriented NGO, Women and Society Association says:

It helped us more than once to finish projects etc. People coming from there want us to do our best. We should give some papers and I think they try to make suitable and easy for us to continue. Their supervision helps us. We do not have problems, maybe some routine.

AAW and ADEW have MOSA seconded-employees working in financial department. According to the interviewee from AAW, having someone from MOSA is very helpful and beneficial to them since they can get her opinion and change what’s wrong before sending documents to MOSA.

Only three organizations that receive funding from the state are Young Christian Women Association, Women and Society Association and Egyptian Women and Development Association. These funds are used for some service-oriented projects.

4.6. Women's NGOs and the National Council for Women

In this part, I will examine how the interviewees evaluate the NCW, its work and to what extent they achieve to co-operate with each other.

Since the NCW is the special mechanism with the highest authority within the state structure dealing with women's issues and problems, and has a broad mandate from drafting national plans and monitoring laws and ministries' activities, it is important to put the level of confidence shown by women's organizations in what the NCW does. On the other hand, given its role and mandate, the NCW constitutes the solid conflict area with the state in women issue as well as the main collaboration field. Moreover, analyzing the relations between them is necessary in that it can show the state's approach towards women's issues and women's organizations as the NCW was established by the state, is located within the state structure and chaired by the President's wife, Suzanne Mubarak.

The interviewees were asked respectively how they evaluate the NCW in Egypt and if they collaborate with them to explore the extent to which they achieve to maintain well-established communication and co-operation. The responses given for the evaluation of the NCW and its work show that there are two groups; one that harshly criticizes the NCW and the other that finds it very important and well-doing. Only two interviewees stressed the importance of having a NCW while criticizing it. On the other hand, most of the women's organizations working in the field of women's rights and engaging in advocacy put severe criticisms

on the NCW. Twenty-one interviewees out of twenty-seven criticize the NCW for similar reasons.

Firstly, I will try to elaborate the criticisms directed at the NCW, their reasons and how it is interpreted.

The main criticism directed at the NCW by the interviewees is that it is just a “decoration” established to impress the international community. They voiced their suspicion about the state’s intention to really advance women. They believe that it was a way for the state to rid itself of international pressure and obtain funding from the international agencies. In the words of a member of New Woman Foundation:

Basically it was established to give the image to the outside world that they care about women’s rights, as a reaction to Beijing Conference. On the big issues, they don’t do anything. It is governmental, and they don’t work against state violations.

On the other hand, a significant number of the interviewees think that the distinction between the roles of women’s NGOs and NCW is not clear. In other words, they say that the NCW’s roles are not well-defined. They believe that the NCW should be responsible for mainstreaming gender issues, monitoring the state institutions and laws, and drafting plans instead of implementing projects, carrying out activities similar to those of NGOs such as income-generating projects, projects to ensure women to obtain ID cards or training programs for women-headed families. They think that the NCW should distinguish itself from NGOs and play its role properly. As an interviewee from the AAW suggests:

The role of NCW is not well-defined. They should have put regulations; it is responsible for putting programs which NGOs should follow. They are like NGOs. They have donors, have projects. They are not putting strategies which should be their role.

Regarding this role conflict, another interviewee from the AAW points to that while the role definitions are not clear, they are treated as competitors since they work in the same field and compete for funds:

Governmental organizations (NCW)-NGO distinction is not clear. NCW puts the rules for us to comply with. We are the tools to implement. Sometimes we are competitive, and therefore they don't delegate the work.

An interviewee from the NWF points to the "rivalry" over funding as one of the drives behind the NCW as well:

NCW has received millions of dollars. It is not up to the level to that money. It is a big show, a big fake show. National Democratic Party nominated 7 women. They have spent millions of pounds to register women for electoral votes. But they don't trust them to give seat in the parliament. It is an attempt to take the money which would go to women's NGOs. They don't want to give money to us.

Another interviewee from NWF, in addition to the funding issue and the intolerance shown by the NCW to the women's organizations with different stances, points to the dilemma of the NCW as "the representative of Egyptian women" and a "governmental" organization:

(...) They just try to co-opt. In May, in a demonstration many women demonstrators were harassed. But NCW did not accept it, they did nothing. They are not talking about women's issues. They say that they are the representative of Egyptian women but when we say that they should take action, they say "We are a governmental organization". They get a lot of money, funds for NGOs, to do what? Through 1980 till 2000, there was a coalition for CEDAW shadow reports-consisted of 120 NGOs-not only women's NGOs, but other NGOs too, through consultation. It was great. It impacted governmental report. In the last report they were talking about violence against women etc which they denied in the past. Next time we tried to get funded for the shadow report, but we could not. UNICEF, UNIFEM and UNDP withdrew the funds but at the same time they put money on NCW report. NCW invited women from NGOs for the governmental report but when you talk differently you are dropped. They are trying to hinder and get very prominent women to be their members. So they are competing with NGOs for funds, for members.

During the period this study was carried out, there were parliamentary elections held in Egypt in 2005. Women's organizations were carrying out trainings for women candidates as well as pressuring the political parties to increase the number of women candidates on their lists. After the lists were finalized and then elections held, women's organizations were outraged. The criticism mainly focused on the NCW since it has had a program to train and support women candidates and had power given in its mandate to affect the policies. During the interviews, a significant number of women criticized the NCW for not being able to influence the ruling party, let alone other institutions. For them, it was the clearest evidence that the NCW doesn't work effectively, and they don't really have a faith in what they do but it is a mechanism established to "show off internationally". An interviewee from the AAW links this to the "clique" around Suzanne Mubarak as well as to the attempts to impress international community by carrying out this kind of programs:

It was a major step. Unfortunately it is a propaganda acting group. It is a prestigious thing to have. They could have done much better. The clique around first lady is not interested in women's issue. They gain privileges. For example, for 4 or 5 years, they have been training women in order for them to join elections as candidates. But in this parliamentary election, only 7-8 women candidates were nominated. There is definitely something wrong. It is showing-off on international platform. NDP-ruling party-nominates only 6 women. It means this mechanism is not used properly.

Similarly, another interviewee from AAW claims that "In the last elections every woman got really disappointed. They did not support those who are not from NDP".

Moreover, some interviewees expressed that the NCW was a mechanism established to co-opt women's movement. An interviewee from the Women and Memory Forum expresses this claim as below:

It was established to create a division within the many effective women NGOs that appeared since the late 1980s. When it comes to work, it is doing work but it is part of the state; it doesn't impose its decisions on government, and it is used by the state as a progressive façade on international platform. It founded it to represent Egypt by internationally and by the state. NCW has appropriated many of women's organizations and initiatives.

This is also supported by another interviewee from the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights. When evaluating it, she calls what the NCW has done "Hijacking the women's NGOs campaigns and activities" while touching on its close ties with the state and affiliation with the ruling family:

They hijacked NGO women campaigns and activities and created bad impression on people-people hated women's rights, hate the president's wife. At the end, people hate everything related to women's rights now. The elections showed the crisis made by them. They have worked on women's empowerment but NDP nominated 6 women opposition nominated 17 in total. It means it has gone worse. Before NCW, NDP nominated 11, opposition parties nominated 22 women in total in the past!! Even they couldn't affect the ruling party. First lady just shows off and at the same time internationally they try to create the image that they work for women's rights. We did a lot in Egypt, worked on laws, honor crimes etc once first lady come, they used it as theirs. Also they publicize the activities they do, they appear on TV, first lady always on TV. So they gained people's hatred. We should change the society within society not making them enemies.They have a huge finance but they used it to build a very nice building. As for the first lady, she wasn't a feminist before but suddenly she started to be interested in women's issue and have become a feminist.³³

³³ She says something that I found very interesting at this point: I appreciate and respect Nawal Al Sa'dawi, we learnt a lot from her. But I am against her approach too. She always acted in a western way, tried to get their attention and supported some western ideals. This made people like enemies of women's rights. We should work within our society, by gaining their support.

Some interviewees also claim that their plans or activities were stolen by the NCW. An interviewee from the NWF, who is also one of the prominent feminists in Egypt, claims that:

They hijacked one of our projects which is about women in shadows. They played it on TV during Ramadan as episodes but our name was not mentioned. In the end of it, on the top was their name, and then many women's organizations. We asked them about it, we told them that it was our project but officially they never responded.

This is what happened with the CEWLA as well, as an interviewee from the organization claims:

On the official level, they are doing a good work. At the practical level, although they are having some work, it is not...For example, as part of political participation work, they have trained women to run for elections but NCW doesn't really support them in the field. Moreover, all our work is included in their work. We carried out activities to ensure women to have ID cards and the number of women we had registered was included in their annual reports.

Some interviewees criticize it for not having a genuine interest in women's problems and not helping women in the conflicts with the state.

A very serious blame comes from an interviewee with the NWF:

They are failures. They got a lot of funds, millions of dollars but never do anything. They copy the projects of NGOs and they do it. They do not create anything. They are not sensitive to women's problems, because these women are not obeying the government. Last year, there was an explosion in Sinai; police officers captured Sinai residents, took men and then women in order to put pressure on them. NCW never spoke about this issue, but they know about it. On 25 May³⁴, there was a demonstration against government and women demonstrators were terribly harassed. They kept silent at first. When they spoke about this issue, they said "These women are not from us, the demonstration is not a feminist demonstration. We do not know anything about them so we are not supposed to do

³⁴ On 25 May 2005, there was a protest against an article in the Constitution held by the opposition parties and some Egyptian NGOs. In the demonstration, some Egyptian men with security officials attacked those women and sexually harass them by tearing their clothes and jumping on them.

anything about them". The only good thing they do is the legal assistance bureau.

In that view, another interviewee from the ADEW agrees that:

They are trying to do a lot of things. They want to appear as doing a lot of work in front of the community. Suzanne Mubarak wants people to think that she is doing work for the community. They don't really innovate something. It is more a media propaganda.

I also received two humorous responses. When I asked how she evaluates the NCW, my interviewee from the New Woman Foundation said laughing:

When Egyptians do not like their football clubs performance, they usually shout at them from the places where they sit: "Why are you standing there? Just go home!" I want to say it.

Like others, Nawal Al-Sa'dawi, while adding a joke made by the women, claims that the NCW was established to impress the Western states and present the regime as democratic and concerned with women's issues :

The National Council for Women is headed by so-called first lady (as Americans do!!). After the elections many women say that NCW should be cancelled. Even they make jokes, they say that their money should be appropriated and spent to build graves for women. NCW was established to make a show to Americans and Europeans, to show them that women are advanced under the Mubarak Regime, to show that there is democracy. It is a big lie. Corruption, lies, and the presentation of the lies through the media...

On the other hand, six interviewees think that the NCW does a very good work with a special emphasis on Suzanne Mubarak, on contrary to views held by its critics. All the interviewees from the Young Christian Women Association expressed their admiration for Suzanne Mubarak, in line with their views on the state-NGO/ civil society relations. Two of the rest, who state that the NCW is very helpful and doing a great job, are from two service-oriented organizations; the Women and Society Association and the Helwan Institution for Community Development. In

my opinion, since they work in service field and the state and the NCW supports their work through micro-credits and they carry out activities in line with the state's official policies, their expectations are met by the NCW. Other two are from the ADEW and AAW.

To better understand the relations between the NCW and NGOs, the interviewees were also asked if their organizations collaborate with the NCW and carry out joint activities. Out of eleven organizations, only an interviewee from a service-oriented NGO, the Women and Society Association, said they receive financial and technical help from the NCW as a small organization. The interviewees from the ADEW also said that they hold conferences together and attend the NCW's NGO Branch's meetings since it is a good way to reach out people. While others say that they do not collaborate or work together, a couple of the interviewees from the ECWR say that they tried it in the past but they couldn't get results, however, they still send recommendations and studies "to make them do something". Like the ECWR, an interviewee from the New Woman Foundation also points out that they tried to work with it in the past, but as "they don't like the different opinions", they either didn't invite them or didn't accept their invitations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The relations between the state and women's organizations in contemporary Egypt have been the focus of the present thesis. The thesis was based on field research and in-depth interview method was used to explore the relationships between the state and women's organizations. In the present study, firstly I have examined the relations between women's NGOs and the state in Egypt starting from the emergence of women's activism to Mubarak period in the second chapter. In the third chapter, I focused on the political situation and civil society under Mubarak and examined the reasons behind the re-emergence of women's activism as well as the relations between the women's NGOs and the Mubarak regime, the impact of the international pressure on the state policies, and laws regarding the issue as the factors shaping this relationship.

In this concluding chapter, I will summarize and discuss the results of the in-depth interviews by the subjects I evaluated in the fourth chapter. However, before summarizing my findings based on the field research, I would like to summarize the findings of second and third chapters.

The history of the Egyptian women's activism can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, which was a period of transformation in Egypt under Mohammad Ali and, afterwards, his successors. As a result of the ambitious modernization project started by Mohammad Ali, reforms to modernize the military and state structure were followed by the reforms in education in general and female education in particular. The "New"

women (Jayawardena, 1986: 12) who were products of this new Western style education and new ideas, started to speak out, publish magazines and organize themselves. During the national revolution from 1919 to 1920 they actively got involved in the Egyptian nationalist movement and demonstrations against the occupation in the same ranks as the male leaders. "During this time, women's feminist and nationalist activism occurred side by side" (Badran, 1993: 139). However, after the formal independence in 1922, women were not granted the right to vote as well as their demands to reform the Personal Status Law remained unfulfilled. From then on, the battle over the PSL would continue and constitute one of the main battle areas between the state, women's organizations and the Islamists. For these reasons, women started organizing again. During this period the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) was established under the leadership of Huda Sha'rawi. In the 1940s, the Egyptian women's movement started to diverge and a number of other women's organizations that were charity-oriented, political and pro-communist as well as Islamist oriented Muslim Women's Society were established (Badran: 1991: 212).

With Nasser's coming to power through a coup d'etat in 1952, a new era started for women as well as for the country. Nasser embarked on a project to transform the country's social and economic system through land reform, industrialization, a central planning with an emphasis on education and welfare. On the other hand, Nasser regime was intolerant of any social force outside state control and it either repressed all political forces or co-opted them through re-organization along corporation lines (Abdelrahman, 2004: 93-96). The notorious law of Associations no. 64 was made under Nasser. As part of the suppression of all the independent political groupings, women's activism was suppressed, too. However, Nasser's policies had much more diverse impacts on the women's situation and their activism since the suppression of the women's organizations was accompanied by

important reforms whereby women's situation underwent great changes due to the new welfare state's commitment to social egalitarianism (Badran, 1993: 139; Al-Ali, 2000: 66-67). While the women's organizations were dissolved one by one and prominent women activists were jailed or forced into self-exile, women were granted the right to vote and run for political office, the right to work; all university graduates were guaranteed state sector jobs and working women were provided with supporting social services like maternity leave and child care.

It contributed to the development of state feminism as a legal, economic, and ideological strategy to introduce changes to Egyptian society and its gender relations. In its own turn, state feminism contributed to the political legitimacy of Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime and its progressive credentials. (Hatem, 1992: 231).³⁵

As a matter of fact, a new generation of feminists took advantage of the opportunities opened up by the Nasserite state in education and work, and gained their intellectual, social and professional skills in this era (Al-Ali, 2000: 71; Badran, 1996: 215).

Under Sadat, the Egyptian state underwent significant changes again. So did the women's situation. Sadat period was a time of shifts from the policies pursued by Nasser. First of all there was a shift from socialism and anti-western approach to *Infitah* (open-door) capitalism and pro-western policies as well as from Pan-Arabism to a focus on "Egyptianism". On the other hand, "Islamic fundamentalism" became more visible and the regime allied itself with the Islamists in search for legitimacy and support as well as weakening the leftists and Nasserites. However, the alliance with the Islamists was cut off and then the regime allied with the USA and the West as well as international organizations. These policies had serious implications for women as well. First of all,

³⁵ While Hatem calls this state feminism, she notes that this concept of state feminism refers more to "ambitious state programs that introduce important changes in the reproductive and productive roles of women" than to "formal (legal and ideological) state commitment to women's rights" (Hatem, 1992: 231).

the official commitments to gender equality under the former regime were abandoned. Secondly, during Sadat era women were caught between the regime's and Islamists' pressure. While the regime allied itself respectively with Islamists and the Western powers, it first enacted some conservative laws in search for legitimacy, then, after parting the ways with Islamists, it amended the Personal Status Law and accorded women thirty seats in the Parliament due to the need for international support and the beginning of the UN Decade for Women in 1975. However, When Sadat era came to an end with his assassination, women still lacked independent organizations of their own and there was still not a general state programme to promote women's rights (Al-Ali, 2000: 74).

Mubarak period, which started after Sadat, has witnessed a flurry of civil society organizations including women's NGOs. The factors that gave way to the "revival" of the women's activism in Egypt have been linked to the debates around reforming the Personal Status Law (Ahmed, 1998), failure of the ideologies like Marxism and Nasserism to raise woman question (Pratt, 2005), rising Islamic revival (Hatem, 1992) and the impact of International constituencies and the UN Decade for Women (Al-Ali, 1997; Al-Ali, 2000). On the other hand, not only have numerous women's NGOs emerged in this period, but also have they started to take on formerly taboo issues such as women's reproductive rights, clitoridectomy and violence against women.

An increased Islamic activity and confrontations with the Islamists, increasing demand on the Egyptian government to comply with UN conventions as well as increasing economic dependence on the West and international donor organizations, ambiguous messages supported by the regime, concessions given to the Islamists and conservative forces, restrictive laws regulating the civil society in Egypt and the continuous persecution of the civil society organizations, especially

human rights and advocacy NGOs, and the international pressure have been the factors shaping women's activism and women's NGOs relations with the state in Egypt in the last two decades.

What are noteworthy for this period are the increasing international pressure on the government and the impact of international women's movement as well as of the international funding agencies on the women's activism in Egypt (Al-Ali, 2000: 80-81). Under the pressure exerted by the international community, the state in this period seems to have been committed to the gender issues and established a national women's machinery, the National Council for Women. However, it has continued to punish politically active women's NGOs through closing down of them as was the case with the Arab Women's Solidarity Association in the second half the 1980s, or using the vast power accorded to the Ministry of Social Affairs with the Law of Associations.

Against this background, I interpreted the responses of the interviewees concerning such subjects as the cooperation between the women's NGOs, their opinions about women's problems in Egypt, their demands from the state, their relations with the state and Ministry of Social Affairs in specific, and how they evaluate the National Council for Women as well as the cooperation between them and the National Council for Women.

Here I will express the findings of my analysis by summarizing and evaluating the responses given by the interviewees on these subjects. Since brief information on the selected women's NGOs has been given in the previous chapter, I will not include it in this chapter again. However, what I want to examine is the co-operation maintained between them since it is important for women's organizations to carry out joint campaigns and do advocacy work in collaboration with each other in influencing the state's policies and changing laws.

When the cooperation between the Egyptian women's NGOs is considered, according to the reports of the interviewees, they have built coalitions with each other on some occasions such as to celebrate the International Women's Day and to produce shadow reports for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee. However, they had difficulties to sustain these joint activities due to the alternative meetings held by the National Council for Women in the former case, and the withdrawal of the funds granted by such UN agencies as UNIFEM, UNICEF to the NGO coalition for the shadow reports to support the governmental (the National Council for Women's) report in the latter. In addition to them, they work together in the elections to support and train female candidates in the elections as well as they come together on project basis. Within this framework, it can be said that the level of co-operation is low among the Egyptian women's NGOs, although change can be created and state policies can be influenced through networking and pressure exerted by a coalition of NGOs.

My analysis of the interviews has continued with the interviewees' opinions about what problems Egyptian women face and what they do expect from the state. Since the state can be a source of liberation as well as discrimination/ domination, and the women's organizations work against the state as well as they do work to influence its policies, I think it was important to find out what the Egyptian women's NGOs want the state to do.

Considering the problems that Egyptian women face, majority of the interviewees think that they stem from the cultural attitudes and traditions. They also distinguish between the culture and religion noting that it is the traditions that put obstacles to women in many fields, not the religion. According to them, although laws grant women the same rights as men's, women are discriminated against in many fields, for instance

they cannot be judges although there is no law barring them. Women's political participation and political representation are identified as another problem by many. However, although it is a very serious problem in Egypt, sexual harassment was mentioned only by three of them, while violence against women and reproductive health were mentioned by, also, only three. Feminization of poverty, the impact of the Islamists and the Church were the problems mentioned by few as well.

When it comes to their expectations from the state, in line with their opinions about the problems Egyptian women face, most of them stressed the need to improve the representation of women in media and school curriculum, and change the society instead of underlying the laws. According to them what is problematic is not the laws but their implementation. On the other hand, some of them pointed to the discrimination in the laws regarding divorce and adultery, while three expressed their wish that the state amend all the laws in line with the CEDAW removing all its reservations, and ratify the Optional Protocol. Also, two interviewees called attention to the ambiguous and contrary messages supported by the state. Lastly, some of them linked the women's problems to wider democracy issues in the country claiming that women can only be represented in a democratic environment.

Apart from these issues, the relations between the state and women's organizations have been the focus of this thesis and analyzed in the thesis from several different aspects. Firstly, I will summarize what kind of problems and confrontations women's organizations experienced with the state during their activities.

When the confrontations and the problems with the state are analyzed, it can be said that the range of them vary from severe confrontations to less significant problems which are caused by the restrictive laws or bureaucratic procedures that hinder or delay their activities. When the

serious confrontations are considered, it wouldn't be wrong to say that women's advocacy NGOs with more radical stands experience more severe confrontations with the state given their political nature. The closure of those women organizations is the typical confrontation with the state for them as it was the case with New Woman Foundation (NWF) and Center for Egyptian Women Legal Aid (CEWLA). These organizations both were refused registration when they applied to Ministry of Social Affairs to re-register under the new Law of Associations no. 84, which required all the existing NGOs to re-register. In both cases, they were not given any specific reasons but unspecified "security reasons".

On the other hand, although it doesn't work in a "sensitive" field, Helwan Institution for Community Development was refused registration since a member of the Board was not approved. This case shows that not only do the women's advocacy NGOs with radical and political stands experience serious confrontations with the state; but service-oriented women's organizations can also be the object of the state's persecution.

Confrontations with the state also show itself in the state's intervention in NGOs' internal affairs. This can be exemplified through the problems Alliance for Arab Women (AAW) and Association for the development and Enhancement of Women (ADEW) experienced. An elected member of the Board was refused to serve by Ministry of Social Affairs in the former organization and the latter faced the danger of being dissolved when some board members decided to attend a conference abroad paying from the budget without asking Ministry of Social Affairs for approval. In the former case, the problem was solved through the court, and in the latter, through the meetings with MOSA to explain the situation.

What is important to note at this point is that all the problems they had could be solved through negotiations or court process. However, it is also important to note here that in three examples of closure, there was international pressure exerted by international human rights organizations over the Egyptian state in solidarity with these women's NGOs.

When it comes to other problems the women's NGOs experience during their activities, restrictive laws or bureaucratic procedures should be mentioned. They usually take the form of rejecting or delaying projects or approvals for foreign funding. The Law of Associations allows MOSA to restrict or prohibit the activities of the NGOs as well as to control over the foreign funding, which almost all women's organizations rely on. Most of the interviewees complain that the Law and these procedures, at the hands of MOSA, turn into a control/punishment mechanism and are used to hinder their activities. When the control of this kind is considered, it can be said that almost all NGOs experience these problems.

As another form of MOSA control, some employees can be appointed to work with the NGOs. In our case, only two members from Alliance for Arab Women (AAW) and Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women (ADEW) pointed out that they have MOSA seconded employees working in their financial departments. However, one person from AAW thinks that her existence is beneficial in that they can get her opinion and change what's wrong before sending documents to MOSA for approval.

On the other hand, although it was explained by others from the same organization, an interviewee from the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women (ADEW) said that they didn't experience any confrontation with the state since they stay away from politics given

the organization's working field. When asked if they had any problems with the state and if there is any decision taken by MOSA about them, the interviewees from the Young Christian Women Association (YCWA) stressed their compliance with the rules while the interviewee from the Women and Society Association evaluated MOSA's work as "doing their best to help them".

In the fourth chapter, I also examined how the interviewees evaluate the NCW, its work and to what extent they achieve to co-operate with each other.

Since the National Council for Women (NCW) is the special mechanism with the highest authority within the state structure dealing with women's issues and problems, and has a broad mandate from drafting national plans and monitoring laws and ministries' activities, it was important to put the level of confidence shown by women's organizations in what the NCW does. On the other hand, given its role and mandate, the NCW constitutes the solid conflict area with the state in women issue as well as the main collaboration field. Moreover, analyzing the relations between them was necessary in that it can show the state's approach towards women's issues and women's organizations as the NCW was established by the state, is located within the state structure and chaired by the President's wife, Suzanne Mubarak.

According to the views on the National Council for Women, the interviewees can be divided into two groups; one that directs harsh criticisms at the NCW, which constitutes the majority with twenty-one interviewees, and the other that praises the work done by the National Council for Women with an emphasis on Suzanne Mubarak.

Most of the interviewees expressed disbelief and distrust in the state's reasons to establish the National Council for Women. It has been stated

by many that the National Council for Women was established to impress the international community, to rid itself of international pressure; therefore it is just a “decoration” that works to serve the regime’s need to show itself as democratic and concerned about women’s rights. On the other hand, some interviewees expressed their opinion that National Council for Women was established and has served to co-opt women’s movement. These interviewees claimed that it has appropriated many of women’s organizations and initiatives as well as their activities by including them in their annual reports or openly putting their names under these activities.

The National Council for Women is also criticized for being not really interested in women’s problems, and not being able to influence the state policies. They exemplify this primarily through the number of the women candidates nominated by the ruling party as well as by the others. At this point, they also call attention to the close association of the NCW with the ruling family and its governmental nature. Thereby, they point to the dilemma of the NCW as “the representative of Egyptian women” and a “governmental” organization. They complain that when the women’s organizations applied to the NCW in order for it to take action, they always got refused on the ground that it is a governmental organization and it cannot work against it. These are the major reasons why most of the interviewees do not have a belief in the NCW and why they call it a “big, fake show on the international platform”.

Other criticisms can be centered on the unclear distinction between the roles of NGOs and the NCW. It has been stated that the international funds which were once channeled to the women’s NGOs, are now granted to the NCW by depriving women’s NGOs of the resources to carry out their activities. Also, it is believed that the NCW should work on mainstreaming gender issues, monitoring laws and state institutions,

drafting plans instead of implementing projects similar to those of women's NGOs.

On the contrary to the views held by the critics, six interviewees think that the NCW does a very good work, putting a special emphasis on Suzanne Mubarak. All the interviewees from the Young Christian Women Association expressed their admiration for Suzanne Mubarak, in line with their views on the state-NGO/ civil society relations. Two of the rest, who state that the NCW is very helpful and doing a great job, are from two service-oriented organizations; the Women and Society Association and the Helwan Institution for Community Development. In my opinion, since they work in service field and the state and the NCW support their work through micro-credits and they carry out activities in line with the state's official policies, their expectations are met by the NCW.³⁶

As for the collaboration between the National Council for Women and women's NGOs in question, it can be said that women's NGOs that are more critical of the National Council for Women and the state policies such as New Woman Foundation are not invited to or included in the National Council for Women's activities. They stated that even if they tried to work together, they were either ignored or dropped from the list. In that sense, it can be claimed that the National Council for Women is not responsive to more radical women's organizations and works in a way that is more "governmental" and is caught by this identity. On the other hand, only one interviewee from a service-oriented NGO, Women and Society Association, said that they receive financial and technical help from the National Council for Women while others said that they do not collaborate or work together except for attending the conferences held by them from time to time.

³⁶ Other two are from the Association for the Development of Enhancement of Women and Alliance for Arab Women.

To conclude, I have showed in the present thesis that the very nature of the relations between the state and women's organizations in Egypt has gone under significant changes throughout its history depending on the shifting state policies and political developments. The Egyptian women's activism emerged due to the reform attempts made in the modern state-building period; took a nationalist direction during colonial period; affected by the contradictory outcomes of Nasser's state feminism and co-optation policies as well as Sadat's shifting allies with the Islamists and the West. Lately, it has been shaped by an environment where Mubarak's ambiguous messages, rising Islamic activism, international community's pressure on the state and the international agendas have been determinant. Throughout these periods, the state, on the one hand, has "attempted to define the "woman question" to suit its own political ends and ...promoted new roles for women for pragmatic and ideological purposes" (Badran, 1991: 228). On the other hand, the resources created as a result have constituted the major "opportunity spaces" (Waylen, 1998: 15) for women's organizations to benefit and make further moves. Besides, what constituted the major contestation arena between them have been the Personal Status Laws, and the debates around reforming these laws reflected the instrumentality of the woman issue under different regimes. Lastly, women's organizations have been on the receiving end of the state policies and state control as well as they have been actors that have tried to influence these policies and expand their own space.

When the findings of the research are concerned, first of all, it can be said that as part of the Egyptian civil society, women's rights advocacy NGOs are not immune from the state persecution, which sees them as threats to its authority like all other political organizations and activities. Here, the Association Law of Egypt, which has strict regulations regarding the usage of international financial fund and NGO activities,

provides the state with a control mechanism that is used arbitrarily. Although women's rights advocacy NGOs are the primary group to suffer state control and constant intimidation by the state security, women's development NGOs, which are seen as complementary to the state's policies, thus, tolerated by it, can be the object of it, too. Moreover, overwhelming bureaucratic procedures and strict regulations regarding projects, funding, activities and public meetings leave the women's NGOs of all fields inactive while stripping them of autonomy necessary to emerge as agents of change against the state.

In the spheres of women's rights and gender issues, the Egyptian state under Mubarak has taken significant steps. However, ignorance of the women's organizations demands and the concessions given to the conservative forces make one suspicious of the regime's interest in the issue. At this point, it can be claimed that the main drive behind the regime's interest in gender issues is the pressure exerted by the international community and the donor organizations. Thus, it wouldn't be wrong to say that what characterizes the relations between the women's NGOs and state in Egypt today is the international pressure exerted on the state. In that sense, women's issues serve the state's need to represent itself on the international platform as a democratic state, thus, proving their instrumentality in the hands of the state.

On the other hand, the relations between the women's organizations and National Council for Women reflect the dilemma of its situation, as Rai terms it, as being "in and against the state" (2003: 18). The National Council for Women's reluctance to take up the controversial issues, criticize the governmental institutions and work with the women's NGOs, especially with those that have radical and political stands, make this mechanism idle. That it is not responsive to the women's NGOs concerns and demands and has an exclusive approach in working with them causes it not to be able to go beyond being the state's

legitimization tool. Moreover, what can be reached through the claim that National Council for Women claims over the NGOs' projects and hires women activists from the NGOs is that it is used as a co-optation mechanism in contemporary Egypt by the state.

In addition, what can be said about the women's NGOs vis-à-vis the state, they go through a stagnant period due to the lack of a unified movement with strong campaigns. However, they still challenge the state's authority through the campaigns to change the existing political order as part of the wider civil society as well as their activities and persistent efforts to pass on their individual demands to the state and the National Council for Women.

When the findings of the research are evaluated in the light of the Introduction, it is seen that the Egyptian state, as Al-Ali (2000: 84) states, is still an active actor in shaping gender through its policies and laws, in so doing, a "site of struggle" for women's organizations and offers "opportunity spaces" to them (Waylen: 1998: 15). In this respect, Mubarak regime's proclaimed commitment to women's issues, laws reformed and the national women's machinery established by it constitute the major opportunities for women's NGOs currently. On the other hand, the regime's compromising with conservative forces on the women's issues for political interests, restrictive laws and strict state control in addition to the co-optation strategies are the major threats posed by the state to them. However, the impact of these "threats" is restrained by the international arena (Al-Ali, 2000: 80) in which the Egyptian state operates. The latter is also what characterizes the shifts in regime's policies towards women's issues and organizations under Mubarak along with the growing Islamic/ conservative forces. At this point it can be suggested that further studies focus on the "tense co-operation" between the Mubarak regime and Islamists concerning the woman question with a reference to women's organizations' position.

Moreover, by extending the scope of the present study, the relations between Islamists, the state and women's NGOs concerning women's issues in contemporary Egypt can be researched through interviews with these three actors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I. Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewee

Question 1. Age.....

Question 2. Sex a) Female b) Male

Question 3. Place of birth.....

Question 4. Educational Level

- a) Primary School
- b) Middle School
- c) High School
- d) University
- e) Post-graduate

Question 5. Marital Status

- a) Single
- b) Married
- c) Widow(er)
- d) Divorced
- e) Married, but the couple lives separately

Question 6. Place of Residence City..... Town.....
village.....

Question 7. In which type of place of residence you have lived for the most time in your life?

- a) Metropolis
- b) City
- c) Town
- d) Village

Question 8. Occupation.....

8.1. a) Wage earner b)self-employer c)retired

8.2. Position in the CSO;

a) Voluntary b) Wage earner

II. The Civil Society Organizations in Egypt

Question 9. How could you define civil society?

Question 10. In your opinion, is civil society made up of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) or can we mention a civil society without the existence of CSOs?

Question 11. Do you think that there exists a strong and effective civil society in Egypt?

a) yes, exists b) No, it does not exist c)It is improving
(If your answer is (a) continue with question 12, if it is (b) or (c), skip to question 13.)

Question 12. In your opinion, what are the factors that serve the formation of a strong and effective civil society in Egypt?

Question 13. In your opinion, what are the factors that are obstacles to the formation of a strong and effective civil society in Egypt?

Question 14. In your opinion, does civil society in Egypt has an historical background/tradition or is civil society a new formation that has its roots in recent times?

Question 15. The civil society in Egypt

a) Refers to a formation which shelters a particular group of society.

- b) Refers to a formation which shelters the whole society.
- c) It depends according to the type of CSO whether civil society shelters the all whole society or a particular group of society.
(If your answer is 'a' or 'c' continue with Question 16., if it is 'b' skip to Question 17)

Question 16. In your opinion, which particular group(s) of society is/are sheltered in the civil society in Egypt?

Question 17. In your opinion, should CSOs concentrate on a particular realm of issue in their aims of formation and activities or should they cover more than one issue in their aims of formation and activities?

Question 18. CSOs in Egypt,

- a) Serve to the formation of social compromise.
- b) Serve to the formation of social resistance and opposition.
- c) Both serve to the formation of social compromise, and social resistance and opposition.

Question 19. In your opinion, what are the main factors that differentiate the activities of CSOs from the activities of the state?

Question 20. In your opinion, do the governments give importance to the role of CSOs in Egypt?

a) yes, explain

b) No, explain

Question 21. In your opinion, how does the state in Egypt approach the CSOs?

- a) The state approaches positively and wants to act in collaboration with CSOs.
- b) The state supports CSOs but does not act in collaboration with them.

- c) The state's attitude towards CSOs is neutral.
- d) The state does not want to be in collaboration with CSOs.
- e) The state wants to put CSOs under its control and repression.
- f) The state's approach changes according to each CSO.
- g) The state's approach changes from time to time.

Question 22. Have you ever experienced a confrontation with the state during the activities of your CSO?

a) Yes, what was the problem, how did you cope with that problem?

b) No, explain.

Question 23. Do you think that the existing laws in Egypt are well made to guarantee the foundation and activities of CSOs?

a) Yes

b) No

Question 24. In your opinion, what kind of changes should be done in the existing laws?

Question 25. Do you think that today's CSOs have a class-based structure with their administrators and members or they shelter heterogeneous class-bases?

Question 26. For you, what are the most important problem(s) of Egypt today?

Question 27. In your opinion, what are the major challenges women face in Egypt today?

Question 28. What should the state's role be in women's issue? What role do you expect from the state to play?

Question 29. The state has connotations of the feeling of.....in my mind. (You can mark more than one choice)

- a) Trust
- b) Fear
- c) Respect
- d) Obligatory obedience
- e) Love
- f) Repression

Question 30. Is there any decision taken by Ministry Of Social Affairs (MOSA) about your organization?

Question 31. Has anybody from MOSA attended in your board meetings?

Question 32. Do you have any MOSA seconded-employee?

Question 33. Do you get any assistance/ fund from the state?

Question 34. How do you evaluate the foundation of National Council For Women (NCW) and the work which has been done by it?

Question 35. Do you collaborate or work with National Council For Women (NCW) and take part in NCW's projects?

For Islamic Organisations

(Question 36. How do you evaluate the state's approach towards you as an Islamic organization?)

III. Questions About the CSO in Which the Interviewee Participates

Question 37. What is the name of the CSO in which you participate?

Question 38. What is the aim of foundation of this CSO?

Question 39. Are you a member of the CSO or are you in an administrating position?

- a) Member
- b) Administrator
- c) Both

(If your answer is 'a' continue with question 31., if it is 'b' skip to Question 32., is your answer is 'c', answer both the Question 31. and Question 32.)

Question 40. What is your personal aim in being a member of this CSO?

Question 41. What is your personal aim for being in an administrating position in this CSO?

Question 42. Are you a member of another CSO/CSOs?

a) yes- What are they?

b)No

Question 43. Are you a member of a political party?

- a) yes b) No

Question 44. What is the date of foundation of this CSO?.....

Question 45. What is the sort of this CSO? Registered under MOSA?

Question 46. Which city is the center of this CSO? And, does this CSO have branches? How many are they?

Question 47. In your opinion, what kind of a membership profile does this CSO have with regard to the distribution of age, sex, educational level and level of income?

Question 48. Activities of this CSO;

a) What are your local-scaled activities, explain.

b) What are your national-scaled activities, explain.

c) What are your international-scaled activities, explain.

Question 49. What do you especially aim to change through the activities of your organization?

Question 50. In your opinion, what is the most important/major means to change the women's status/or to achieve your goals?

Question 51. How many members does this CSO have?

Question 52. Which personal conditions are required for to be a member of this CSO?

Question 53. Do you have any members from the state?

Question 54. Do you have male members?

Question 55. What are the sources of income of this CSO?

- a) Membership subscriptions/donations
- b) Economical Investment/economical participation/immovable property
- c) Pres/Project/lottery/courses/educational activities
- d) Others

Question 56. Are there any activities of this CSO that are done in collaboration with other CSOs? If yes, with which CSOs did you collaborate? Please give the name of these CSOs.

Question 57. How do you evaluate this CSO's relations with other CSOs? Is it well adjusted or trouble making? (Are there any organizations you have problems? If yes, please tell.)

Question 58. Does this CSO have any relations with other CSOs in abroad?

- a) It is a member of a CSO in abroad
- b) It is the Egypt representative of a CSO in abroad.
- c) It is collaborating with other CSOs in abroad. Which CSO(s)?
- d) It does not have any relation with CSOs in abroad.

Question 59. What are the main bodies in your organization?

Question 60. Who is the determinant in the decision-making processes of this CSO?

- a) Chairperson/Executive committee
- b) Members
- c) I do not know
- d) other

Question 61. To what degree do the members have chance to control the fulfillment of the activities?

Question 62. Through what type of a process is the chairman/board members elected?

For Christian/Islamic Organizations

Question 63. Do you deliver services to Muslim/Christian women, too?

Question 64. Do you work with Muslim/Christian Women?

IV. Questions About International Organizations and Foreign Funding

Question65. What do you think about foreign funding?

Question66. Do you get funds from international foundations/organizations? If yes, please tell the names.

Question67. Is there any international foundation/organization you refrain from getting funds? If yes, please tell the names and reasons?

V. Opinions about Society, CSOs, State and Women Issue

strongly agree i agree indecisive disagree strongly disagree

Question 68. I think all social groups can participate in politics equally () () () () ()

Question 69. I think our cultural structure and the general mentality of people constitute difficulties for the formation of civil society. () () () () ()

Question 70. I think that the citizens in Egypt are kept weak by the law under the state control. () () () () ()

Question 71. Politics in Egypt has been a realm of conflict and relation of interest for the politicians and has not been able to reach public base. () () () () ()

Question 72. I think sharia should be a source of legislation. () () () () ()

Question 73. I think that individual's rights and liberties Should be privileged against the sacredness of the state. () () () () ()

Question 74. I think that the husband should be the head of Family to have a healthy family structure. () () () () ()

Question 75. I am against military intervention to politics. () () () () ()

Question 76. I think that the role of the leader in a CSO is very important. () () () () ()

Question 77. I think that the state limits freedoms. () () () () ()

Question 78. I think that the existence of a repressive state is one of the most important obstacles to civil society in Egypt. () () () () ()

Question 79. I think that religious sects function as a CSO, too. () () () () ()

Question 80. I think that the formation of civil society in Egypt is an intellectual movement. () () () () ()

Question 81. I think that the rights put by international treaties should be source of legislation. () () () () ()

Question 82. I think that the opposing ideas are always considered to be threatening for the unity of the country by the state administration in Egypt. () () () () ()

Question 83. I think that the notion of state as a provident father is dominant in Egypt. () () () () ()

Question 84. I am not against the closure of political parties, when it is necessary. () () () () ()

Question 85. I think Feminism as a Western ideal is an alien concept to Egyptian women. () () () () ()

Question 86. I think Arab women in different countries have the same problems and we can carry out joint projects to solve () () () () ()

them.

Question 87. I think struggling against female circumcision, Rape, domestic violence, and for reproductive rights are as important as struggling for political rights. () () () () ()

Question 88. I think when it comes to rights, there can be differences on the basis of culture/society. () () () () ()

Question 89. I think abortion can not be a private decision, it should be restricted by law to certain conditions. () () () () ()

APPENDIX B: LIST OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWEES

The Alliance for Arab Women

- Head of Financial Department
- Project Assistant
- Project Manager

The Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women

- Donor Coordinator
- Manager of the Media Unit
- Domestic Violence Trainer

The Center for Egyptian Women Legal Aid

- Director of IR Unit

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights

- Chairperson
- International Relations Officer
- Assistant International Relations Officer

The Egyptian Women and Development Association

- Chairperson

The Helwan Institution for Community Development

- 2 Members
- Manager of the Workshop

The New Woman Foundation

- Chairperson
- Conference Organizer
- Co-Researcher
- Coordinator
- 2 Members

The NGO Forum for Women in Development

- Executive Director

The Women and Memory Forum

- Member/ Researcher

The Young Christian Women Association

- 2 Members
- Treasurer

The Women and Society Association

- Project Manager

And Nawal Al-Sa'dawi from International Arab Women's Solidarity Association

APPENDIX C: CONTACT INFORMATION OF THE SELECTED NGOs

The Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women

Address : 8/10, Mathat al-Manial Street, Manial Area, Cairo
Telephone : +202 363 63 45
Web Site : www.adew.org

The Alliance for Arab Women

Address : 28, Adly Street, Flat 74, Down Town, Cairo
Telephone : +202 395 09 11
Web Site : www.theallianceforarabwomen.org

The Arab Women's Solidarity Association- Nawal Al-Saadawi

Telephone : +202 202 22 79

The Center for Egyptian Women Legal Aid

Address : Al-Higaz Tower, Off Engineer Abdul Hadi Radi Street, Off
Ard-el Lewaa, Boulaq, Daqrour, Cairo
Telephone : +202 326 21 33
Web Site : www.cewla.org

The Women and Society Association

Address : Ard al-Lewaa, Boulaq, al-Daqrur, Cairo
Telephone : +202 731 10 07

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights

Address : 135, Misr Helwan al-Zeraay Street, 2nd Floor, Suit 3,
Maadi, Cairo
Telephone : +202 527 13 97
Web Site : www.ecwronline.org

The Egyptian Women and Development Association

Address : 92, Faisal Street, al-Madina al-Faisaliyya Towers, Tower
No: 3, al-Maryotteyya, al-Haram, Giza, Cairo
Telephone : +202 745 25 45

The Helwan Institute for Community Development

Address : 27, Tariq Ibn Zeyad Street, Helwan, Cairo
Telephone : +202 554 24 91

The New Woman Foundation

Address : 14, Abdelmonem Sened Street, Off Ahmed Orabi Street,
1st Floor, Mohandessin, Cairo
Telephone : +202 346 49 01

The NGO Forum for Women in Development

Address : 31, 26 July Street, 5th Floor, Muhammad Naguib Area,
Cairo
Telephone : +202 574 32 10

The Women and Memory Forum

Address : 4, Omar Ibn Abdel Aziz Street, Off Iraq Street,
Mohandessin, Cairo
Telephone : +202 335 71 30
Web Site : www.wmf.org.eg

The Young Christian Women Association

Telephone : +202 590 63 11
+202 291 81 31