



Haya Al-Dajani, Maysa Baroud,
and Deema Refai

ARAB REFUGEE
WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS

Challenges and Opportunities in
Jordan and Lebanon

Emergent Entrepreneurship

Collection Editor

DREW HARRIS

LIVED PLACES
PUBLISHING



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To the Arab refugee women entrepreneurs whose lives and stories inspired every page of this book:

May your voices continue to be heard, your contributions recognized, and your journeys honored.

This book is dedicated to your struggle, your determination, and your entrepreneurship.

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Abstract

This book integrates theoretical frameworks of empowerment, place, and women's entrepreneurship with vivid real-life cases of Arab refugee women entrepreneurs in Jordan and Lebanon. Through diverse stories, the book illuminates the varied pathways and challenges faced by Arab refugee women across generational, national, and socio-economic lines. Featured case studies include a displaced Palestinian embroiderer preserving cultural heritage in Jordan, a Syrian refugee woman leading a social enterprise empowering fellow refugees, a 'double refugee'—a Palestinian refugee in Syria who was later displaced to Lebanon—and several other Arab refugee women operating home-based or community-rooted ventures in refugee camps and urban settings in both Jordan and Lebanon. Each of these case studies tackles a different dimension of these women's entrepreneurial journeys, highlighting their struggles and determination as they work to support their households during displacement. Through these detailed narratives and critical analyses, the book highlights the complexities of displacement and illustrates the socio-economic, legal, and cultural barriers these women navigate. As such, the book explores the interplay between empowerment and entrepreneurship and critically examines the potential of entrepreneurship as a pathway toward resilience and self-determination for refugee women. The book concludes with actionable, evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at fostering inclusive entrepreneurial environments, supportive ecosystems, and empowering opportunities for refugee communities in their host countries. Each chapter concludes with clear learning summaries, thought-provoking discussion questions, and carefully selected recommended readings to enrich the reader's understanding and engagement.

Key words

Refugee Entrepreneurship, Women's Empowerment, Arab Refugee Women, Jordan, Lebanon

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Learning objectives

1. Understand the historical and geopolitical contexts influencing Arab refugee women's entrepreneurship in Jordan and Lebanon.
2. Analyze the intersectionality of gender, refugee status, and entrepreneurship.
3. Critically assess the effectiveness of empowerment frameworks for refugee women entrepreneurs.
4. Recognize the structural barriers and opportunities affecting refugee women's entrepreneurial activities.
5. Evaluate the extent to which entrepreneurship can empower refugee women and contribute positively to their host communities.

Introduction

This book offers a compelling exploration of the entrepreneurial experiences of Arab refugee women in the contexts of Jordan and Lebanon, and the potential transformative power of entrepreneurship in their lives. The book provides a selection of intricate stories and challenges faced by Iraqi, Palestinian and Syrian refugee women (being the prevalent groups of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon) who utilize entrepreneurship to overcome the challenges of being an Arab refugee woman in places like Jordan and Lebanon. In doing so, the book unveils the diverse social identities, backgrounds, skills, and entrepreneurial ventures of these inspirational women. It sheds light on the socio-economic barriers, legal hurdles, cultural biases, and place-based constraints they confront.

The book also analyzes how gender intersects with their refugee status and social identity, and how this interplay affects their access to resources, networks, and opportunities. The book emphasizes the potential of entrepreneurship as a pathway to empowerment, challenging gender and social norms. By showcasing the determination and creativity of the Arab refugee women entrepreneurs, and their ability to overcome adversity, this book calls for increased recognition, support, and inclusive opportunities for Arab refugee women entrepreneurs wherever

they are located, and highlights their crucial role in rebuilding their lives and identities, and contributing to their host nations. In taking a deep dive into this book, we expect that you will appreciate the importance of context in analyzing refugee women's entrepreneurship journeys, learn about the importance and significance of examining the experiences of Arab refugee women entrepreneurs, recognize the specificity of the entrepreneurial journeys of Arab refugee women, and be able to engage critically in evaluating the extent to which entrepreneurship is an empowering pathway for Arab refugee women residing in Jordan or Lebanon.

Warning

Please be aware that references to, and descriptions of, situations and topics which may cause the reader distress occur within this book. These include references to, and descriptions of, refugees' experiences of the bombardment of their homes and neighborhoods, and their journeys of forced displacement.

Why do Jordan and Lebanon have so many refugees?

Contemporary political volatility, protest, and civil war within the Middle East region have led to far-reaching socio-economic upheaval and strife, with a devastating impact generating mass displacement with ensuing poverty for refugees (Althalathini, Al-Dajani & Apostolopoulos, 2020). Most often, women and children are the worst affected (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013), as they have limited power and bear the brunt of much of the devastation (Kuttab, 2008; Al-Dajani, 2022). Yet, they are largely absent

from fora where solutions to the problems of displacement and poverty are deliberated, and from policy discussions surrounding the importance of safe and stable places and contexts.

As we recognize the importance of place and context where the Arab refugee women's entrepreneurship occurs, it is important to start this book with a brief political history of the region as this has had a profound impact upon the regional displacement of peoples from one nation to another. As we witnessed in late 2023, the hundreds of thousands of people peacefully marching and repeatedly protesting globally in support of Palestine and against the Israeli brutal bombardment of Gaza and occupation of Palestinian territories reminded us of the profound transformations this region has witnessed since the Great Arab Revolt in the early twentieth century. Up until then, many Arab nations, including Palestine, were under Ottoman rule for over 400 years (Hathaway, 2019). The Great Arab Revolt played a pivotal role in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and following World War One and the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, Britain and France divided the Middle East into British and French colonies, through a secret convention they made in 1916 (Pappé, 1988). This convention, known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, incensed the Arabs who were expecting independence rather than a replacement colonizer following the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Pappé, 2011). While Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia gained their independence from Britain and France in the 1920s and 1930s, the remaining Arab nations did not gain their independence until at least 1944, and the Republic of Djibouti was the last nation to become independent in 1977.

While the Arab nations were strategizing to gain their independence from their British and French colonizers, the British were implementing the Balfour Declaration which they created in 1917 (Pappé, 1988). In that Declaration, the British government pledged to Britain's Jewish community the establishment of a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people. However, this was neither negotiated with, nor approved by the colonized Palestinians. Instead, the creation of Israel was a violent process that resulted in the ethnic cleansing and destruction of 530 Palestinian villages and cities, thousands of Palestinian deaths, over 70 massacres, and the eviction, expulsion, and displacement of over 750,000 Palestinians (from a population of 1.9 million) to neighboring countries (Pappé, 2006). This catastrophe in 1948, known and remembered as the 'nakbah' (Karmi, 2011), continues to shape regional geopolitics, wars, and displacement. While the descendants of many of these displaced Palestinians eventually became citizens in Jordan and other Arab nations and further afield, millions remain as refugees without the right to return, in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, or as internally displaced persons in the Occupied Palestinian Territories such as Gaza. Additionally, those displaced Palestinians and their descendants with Jordanian citizenship and the right to return, will have their Jordanian citizenship removed, and replaced with a Palestinian one when the two-state solution is agreed and implemented.

In addition to the Palestinian Nakbah, there remains significant volatility in the Arab world. This includes the civil war in Lebanon, the Gulf War in Iraq, the civil wars in Libya and Syria, the ongoing war in Yemen, and the repercussions of these crises. These wars have led to complex power struggles, ethnic and

sectarian tensions, and protracted crises that result in the mass displacement of people escaping danger and seeking safety and stability. In one of our interviews in Jordan, Mariam (pseudonym) explained to us her parents' expulsion from Palestine and their settlement in Jordan, where she is a second-generation Palestinian refugee:

You know, of course, the story of Palestine, since the displacement of the 1948 to the second one in 1967, our families suffered much more than us. We were born in a place (in Jordan) that became an integral part of us. Jordan is our second mother country. They suffered a lot, they were homeless, without shelters or a place to live in. They suffered from so many things ... there were no job opportunities ... That was when they came... It was, of course, because of the Israeli occupation. Their homeland was stolen by the Israelis. No one chooses to leave his homeland except for the cases where leaving is an utmost necessity; caused by war. The occupation. Our country was occupied. Due the geographical location of Jordan. In the past, there were no borders and the Levant (Historical Syria) was one unit ... Also, Jordan opened its borders and welcomed the refugees ... It's similar to when neighbors would rush to help each other and open their houses for each other if there was a hurricane, they'd tell you "my house is open for you", in the same manner Jordan and the rest of the neighboring countries have welcomed the refugees ... In our case, Jordan was the nearest country to us, it's ethnically and linguistically close to us, in addition to the geographic location, it's the nearest to us, and due to many other factors and bonds we share with Jordan, they've chosen to come to Jordan. Well,

first of all, my parents have met and got married here. When my father came here, he was nearly 14 years old. Of course, they were displaced and thus homeless. With the outbreak of wars, the Palestinians were scattered everywhere, we (the Palestinian) fled towards all Arab countries, and hence there's no Arab country without Palestinians among its population. My family was first established in Jordan. They moved to Jordan. Then, they knew each other here, my parents met in Jordan, and the formation of my own family started here. well, just like any other refugee, just like the Syrian refugees nowadays ... They came to Jordan, where camps were established for them.

In another interview in Lebanon, Fadia (pseudonym) shared her experience of being a 'double refugee'. Originally, she and her family were second-generation Palestinian refugees in Syria, and following the war there, they escaped to Lebanon where they came to be known as 'Palestinian refugees from Syria':

I came to Lebanon because war happened in my own house. Bullets fell on my bed and on my balcony. The balcony was gone. All signs of life were gone. Electricity was cut off, I did not have any water. No signs of comfort. Even the centre that I worked at, the source of my income was gone ... I used to see dead bodies of young men all over the place. These young men were university students. I saw unreal scenes - cars exploding in front of my own eyes. A car drove by and then exploded. I saw human body parts and destruction. There was a butcher in the area, all his lambs flew everywhere. Imagine getting a piece of meat right on your balcony. I started screaming. I became hysterical.

I thought it was doomsday or an earthquake. You feel that the world has come to an end. I started helping some people. I put on a big pair of slippers and started saving people. Lost of memories still affect. You hold a piece of flesh in your hand. You see an arm or an eye or a leg ... I ran towards where my husband was, under the shelling and fire. There were a lot of snipers ready to kill me. I ran all night.

You know, we Palestinians were already refugees in Syria, we had nothing to do with the fighting there, we are innocent. I packed a bag, filled it with my hair salon products, like dyes and hair dryers, essential clothes, a blanket and 2 pillows in case we wouldn't find anyone to let us in, then we can sleep by the roadside, and like that, we left Syria. The road was very dangerous. I had to pay 50 thousand Syrian liras which is equivalent to 200 USD, and that was all we had.

The first time we were conned was by the taxi driver. He said, if I knew you were Palestinians, I would not have given you a ride because Palestinians take longer at the border. That means I have to wait for you for a long time. I told him, may God forgive you. He charged us a big amount, around 20 thousand Syrian liras for each passenger – that is the salary of 4 employees. That left us with 10 thousand Syrian liras. We were not conned. For me, it was the first time to travel. My dream was Lebanon. I never thought of any European country. When we crossed the borders to Lebanon, we were done before the Syrian passengers. The taxi driver just shrugged. That was the first struggle. He dropped us off in the middle of the street. He dropped us off where he wanted, not where we wanted or paid for.

In the remainder of this book, we find out how Mariam, Fadia, and other Arab refugee women like them in Jordan and Lebanon engage in entrepreneurship as a way out of poverty for themselves and their families. We will also discuss the barriers and challenges they have to overcome in their host nations in order to do so.

Defining ‘refugees’

Within this book, we adopt the term ‘refugee’ to define persons who have been forcibly displaced from their homelands and their descendants, irrespective of the length of time they have been residing in their host nations. This definition reflects a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the experience and realities of refugees residing in host nations located in the Arab world. We include the descendants of the refugees who were initially displaced, as doing so acknowledges the intergenerational impact and enduring nature of the refugee crisis, and reflects the realities of these generational refugees who continue to be denied the citizenship of the host nations where they are born, because in most Arab nations, citizenship is passed to the children from their father only, or from the husband to his wife upon marriage.

Our definition of refugees recognizes the multifaceted and enduring nature of forced displacement in the Arab world, and reflects the experiences of the Arab refugee women entrepreneurs we engaged with in Jordan and Lebanon. In many ways, the definition reflects a holistic understanding of the refugee experience, encompassing historical, cultural, legal, and geopolitical dimensions, which we feel is essential for informing policy

as well as interventional practices that focus upon the complex challenges that all refugees, whether first-, second-, third-, fourth-, or fifth-generation refugee entrepreneurs, endure. We urge the reader to be aware of the significant distinction between refugees and migrants. That is, refugees are forcibly displaced from their home nations to other nations, whereas migrants are not forcibly displaced. They travel from their home countries to other countries in search of better economic and other opportunities. Unlike refugees, migrants are free to return to their home countries as they please.

Refugee entrepreneurship

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated in 2017 that more than half of the world's refugee population and approximately 40 per cent of internally displaced persons were residing in the Arab world. The majority of these intergenerational refugees will never become citizens of the nations where they are hosted and as such, their employment opportunities remain very limited (Al-Dajani, 2022). As such, entrepreneurship in the informal economy is their lifeline.

The literature on refugee entrepreneurship is growing and presents refugee entrepreneurs as resilient pragmatists, in both the business arena and in navigating their host nations' institutional landscapes. They are reported to be happy to push the boundaries, are resourceful, and, as expected, their enterprises are born out of necessity to tackle burdensome living conditions (Freiling, Harima & Heilbrunn, 2019). However, there are two glaring limitations in this growing literature. Firstly, it is largely gender-blind, as it assumes that the experiences of refugee men entrepreneurs

and refugee women entrepreneurs are the same (Al-Dajani, 2022). Secondly, it largely reflects refugee host nations in the Global North (Desai, Naudé & Stel, 2021) rather than the majority of the refugee host nations located in the Global South (Refai, Haloub & Lever, 2018).

Refugee entrepreneurship is a complex process, and questions still exist around the suitability of entrepreneurship as a way of addressing contextual elements of diversity, identity, equality, unemployment, and poverty—where on the surface entrepreneurship appears to be a useful way of addressing such issues (Williams & Williams, 2011; Smith et al., 2019). To recognize this suitability, within this book we move beyond the dichotomies that hinder contextualized analyses, whereby entrepreneurs are viewed as either ‘conventional’ characterizing successful, innovative, autonomous and opportunity-driven entrepreneurs, or ‘unconventional’ describing reactive, unsuccessful and necessity-driven entrepreneurs (Welter et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2019). Such dichotomies undermine the diversity of entrepreneurship and alienate ‘*everyday entrepreneurs*’ that comprise 99% of all entrepreneurs around the world (Welter et al., 2017), of which refugee entrepreneurs are an important component. Within this book therefore, we embrace a wider view of what entrepreneurship is and what value it adds to the lives of refugees and their communities.

Overview of the book content and its organization

Following this introductory chapter, the book begins with a chapter on ‘place.’ The ‘place’ chapter provides a detailed

discussion of the contexts of Jordan and Lebanon as this is where the Arab refugee women entrepreneurs focused upon in this book reside. The ensuing chapter provides a conceptualization of the extent to which entrepreneurship can be an empowering pathway for Arab refugee women. Here, the extent to which entrepreneurship can facilitate self-empowerment, economic empowerment, and community empowerment, and the extent to which it challenges gender and social norms and stereotypes, are deliberated.

The following three chapters offer a deep dive into the challenges that Arab refugee women in Jordan and Lebanon continue to navigate. These challenges include legal and bureaucratic frameworks, access to finance, resources, and markets, and socio-cultural constraints and gender-based discrimination. For each of these challenges, a case study from Jordan and another from Lebanon are presented. Aided with further case studies of Arab refugee women from Jordan and Lebanon, the penultimate chapter discusses the impact of entrepreneurship on the Arab refugee women's lives and communities. The concluding chapter offers a summary of key findings and insights from the presented case studies throughout the book's chapters, a reflection on the transformative power of Arab refugee women's entrepreneurship, select policy recommendations, and a final call to action for further research, support, and advocacy. As such, through this book we advocate for recognition, support, and inclusive opportunities for Arab refugee women entrepreneurs, emphasizing their role in rebuilding lives, and contributing to the social, political, and economic stability of their host nations.

How to make the most out of this book

Given that you are reading this, you must already be interested in learning more about Arab women refugee entrepreneurs. As such, to get the most benefit out of reading this book, we recommend you to:

1. Make use of the glossary section at the end of the book. When you come across an italicized, bold term in purple throughout the book, please check its definition in the Glossary. Doing so will help you to develop and grow your professional terminology of terms and concepts relating to refugee entrepreneurship.
2. Remember that the stories presented in this book are from the real experiences of women who continue to live in displacement without knowing if they will ever be able to return to their home countries. We use pseudonyms rather than their real names throughout the book to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the women who shared their stories with us.
3. Approach these stories with an open mind. The women whose stories we share here come from varying social, political, and economic backgrounds, and their decisions, challenges, and ways of coping may not always align with what we are used to. As such, we should try to understand and contextualize their experiences, recognizing the strength and resilience they show in incredibly difficult circumstances.
4. Acknowledge that Jordan, Lebanon, and the region where these stories continue to unfold are both politically and

economically volatile, with high uncertainty that impacts how both refugees and citizens can do entrepreneurship. For example, the fall of the Assad regime in Syria on December 8, 2024, is likely to influence neighboring host countries' governments in their calls for Syrian refugee return. And although the mass return of Syrian refugees is not likely to happen in the short-term, it is also likely to influence Syrian refugees' decisions regarding returning to their homeland, even if this means leaving their businesses behind.

5. Be mindful of the misrepresentations of these entrepreneurs and their cultural and ethnic communities in the wider popular media and other channels.
6. Use the stories in this book to have thoughtful discussions about refugee entrepreneurs with others.
7. Think about how we can avoid further stigmatization of these refugee entrepreneurs and their communities, and how we can avoid victimizing them.
8. Reflect upon the shared responsibilities towards refugees and how we can avoid placing such responsibility on one stakeholder or another (for example local governments, other governments, international funding organizations, international organizations, local and other aid organizations, policymakers, humanitarian aid agencies, social influencers, media, etc.).

Recommended readings

Al-Dajani, H. (2022). Refugee women's entrepreneurship: Where from and where to next?. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 14(4), 489–498.

Althalathini, D., Al-Dajani, H., & Apostolopoulos, N. (2020). Navigating Gaza's conflict through women's entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 12(4), 297–316.

Desai, S., Naudé, W., & Stel, N. (2021). Refugee entrepreneurship: Context and directions for future research. *Small Business Economics*, 56, 933–945.

1

The historical evolution of women's empowerment

The concept of empowerment has been a focal point in discussions of social justice, economic development, and gender equality. It is often linked to processes of self-determination, access to opportunities, and the ability to influence one's life circumstances. For Arab refugee women, empowerment is particularly significant as they navigate long-term displacement (also known as protracted displacement), economic hardship, restrictive societal norms, and legal constraints due to their 'refugee' status. The concept of women's empowerment has undergone significant changes over time, shaped by social movements, global policies, and economic transformations. It is important to understand that empowerment is not just about individual progress but also about changing the systems that have historically marginalized women. The journey of women's empowerment has unfolded through different phases, influenced by feminist struggles, development agendas, and human rights advocacy, in both the Global North, and in the Arab world. As such, we begin

this chapter with the historical evolution of women's empowerment in the Global North, and then complement this with the historical evolution of women's empowerment in the Arab world.

Historical evolution of women's empowerment in the global north

1. Early feminist movements: Laying the foundation

The roots of women's empowerment can be traced back to the feminist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries. During this time, women around the world began to challenge the societal structures that restricted their rights. The first wave of feminism, which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focused on securing basic legal rights for women, particularly in Western societies. Women campaigned for suffrage (the right to vote), access to education, and the ability to own property.

One of the most significant milestones of this era was the suffragist movement, which led to legal changes in many countries. For example, women in New Zealand became the first in the world to gain the right to vote in 1893. This period also saw women advocating for greater access to education and employment, recognizing that economic independence was crucial to achieving true empowerment.

The second wave of feminism, which gained momentum in the mid-twentieth century (1940s–1980s), expanded the discussion beyond legal rights. Women began advocating for equality in the workplace, reproductive rights, and the dismantling of traditional gender roles. The feminist slogan "*the personal is political*"

became central, emphasizing that women's personal struggles were deeply connected to societal and political structures. This era saw the rise of influential feminist figures, such as Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Gloria Steinem, who challenged traditional narratives about women's roles in society.

2. Development discourse: Integrating empowerment into economic and social agendas

By the 1970s, discussions on women's empowerment had expanded beyond feminist circles and entered the realm of global development. The Women in Development (WID) movement emerged, emphasizing the need to include women in economic development programs. Policymakers and international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, began recognizing that women's participation in the economy was essential for sustainable development.

However, the WID approach had limitations. It primarily focused on integrating women into existing economic structures without challenging the broader systemic barriers that kept them disadvantaged. As a response, the Gender and Development (GAD) movement emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Unlike WID, GAD emphasized the need to address the root causes of gender inequality. It acknowledged that true empowerment required not just individual progress but also systemic transformations in laws, institutions, and cultural norms.

One of the significant shifts during this period was the recognition that empowerment was not just about economic participation but also about giving women control over their own lives. This meant

ensuring access to healthcare, reproductive rights, and education. As a result, many governments and international organizations started investing in programs that aimed to improve women's literacy rates, maternal healthcare, and leadership opportunities.

3. Global policy integration: The rise of women's empowerment as a global priority

A major turning point in the global recognition of women's empowerment came in 1995 with the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. This landmark conference brought together representatives from nearly 200 countries and produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which remains one of the most comprehensive international agreements on gender equality.

The Beijing Platform for Action set out a clear agenda for addressing issues such as education, political participation, economic independence, and violence against women. It emphasized that empowering women was not just a moral issue but also a fundamental requirement for sustainable development. The impact of this conference was far-reaching, influencing the creation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and later the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.

The fifth SDG (Goal 5) explicitly highlights gender equality and women's empowerment, reinforcing the idea that women's rights must be at the center of global development efforts. Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and businesses worldwide have since adopted policies and programs aimed at addressing gender disparities in various sectors, from education and health to politics and the economy.

4. Intersectionality and inclusive empowerment: Addressing diverse challenges

In recent years, the discourse on women's empowerment has evolved further to recognize that not all women experience oppression in the same way. The concept of intersectionality, introduced by scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s, has become central to understanding empowerment, and highlights that factors such as race, class, ethnicity, disability, and migration status can compound the challenges that women face. For example, refugee and displaced women often face unique barriers to empowerment. They may lack legal rights in their host countries, have limited access to education and healthcare, and experience heightened risks of violence. Similarly, women from indigenous communities or lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face additional discrimination that prevents them from fully participating in society.

In response to such challenges, contemporary empowerment strategies have become more inclusive. Programs now focus on addressing the needs of marginalized women, ensuring they have access to resources and opportunities tailored to their specific circumstances. Efforts to empower women are now more culturally sensitive, recognizing that solutions must be adapted to different social and political contexts.

Historical evolution of women's empowerment in the Arab world

The concept of women's empowerment in the Arab world has evolved in response to historical, cultural, and political changes.

While deeply influenced by global feminist movements, the Arab world has its own unique trajectory shaped by religion, colonial history, nationalism, and modern development initiatives. Understanding this evolution is crucial to appreciating the progress made and the challenges that remain.

1. Early struggles: Women's rights in pre-colonial and colonial eras

Before the modern era, women in the Arab world played vital roles in society, particularly in education, trade, and governance. Historical figures like Khadijah, the wife of Prophet Muhammad and a successful businesswoman, demonstrate that women held influential positions. However, over time, patriarchal interpretations of religious and cultural traditions led to restrictions on women's rights.

During the colonial period (19th and early 20th centuries), many Arab countries were under European rule, which both reinforced and challenged traditional gender roles. While colonial administrations often excluded women from public life, exposure to Western education and ideas also sparked early feminist consciousness. Women began organizing for education and social reform, laying the groundwork for future activism.

2. Nationalism and women's rights (mid-twentieth century)

The mid-twentieth century saw the rise of nationalist movements seeking independence from colonial rule. Women played active roles in these struggles, with many participating in protests, political activism, and armed resistance. In countries like Algeria,