

## The Influence of Affiliation with Feminist Movements on Women's Political Participation Before 2003

By

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### Abstract

The present study aims to clarify the role of women in political participation and their affiliation with women's movements before the change in the political system in 2003. The issue of women is considered part of the issue of democracy in its broad sense. More precisely, it is considered part of the issue of national liberation itself. It is the essence of the content of the issue of democracy. The participation of women in the society in which they exist, whether it is political participation or social participation through feminist movements, is a sign of the democracy of that society and granting women their legitimate rights without enshrining their function within the family. The present study concludes that women lived in a political situation in which there was no participation to a large extent. Women were also monopolized by women close to the ruling class. The election laws indicated the possibility of women's participation and affiliation to the party they wanted, but the application of these laws was the opposite. In addition, the numbers of women with political influence were few. Political work was the preserve of men and the few women close to the ruling class at that time. The present study also recommends the following:

1. Paying attention and shedding light on the struggle of women for their beliefs in previous periods.
2. Competent authorities should increase the numbers of women participating in political activities.
3. Paying attention to women's movements, whose purpose is to defend women's legitimate rights in the Islamic religion and the constitution, and financially and morally financing these movements by the state.

**Keywords:** Affiliation, feminist movements, political activism.

### Introduction

The role of women in Iraq before 2003 was relatively non-existent. To a large extent, women did not participate in politics. This aspect was dedicated to a certain group of women who were close to the ruling class at the time, as well as with regard to their participation in women's movements, which was also largely weak as a result of the secrecy of work during that period. Women's gatherings were carried out in complete secrecy. These gatherings were forbidden because they could affect the ruling class and encourage escalation against the ruling class, which was rejected by those in charge of the state. Therefore, women's movements and women's political participation

did not have a large and influential presence in the community. The present study clarifies and highlights social affiliation and participation of women before 2003.

## **The Problem Statement**

The problem of the present study revolves around presenting the feminist movement in the period before 2003 to clarify the small political participation of women in that period. The feminist movement was carried out secretly away from those in power, so this movement was forbidden by the state, which contradicts the right to have freedom of expression and participation in the party to which the individual feels affiliated. Thus, the present study raises the problems and obstacles that women were suffering from in their struggle against the ruling class to obtain the most basic rights.

## **Significance**

The significance of the present study is due to the fact that it aims to clarify what women were suffering from in previous periods, which in turn adds more confidence to the current feminist movements in order to provide everything that is useful and to make women's struggles in previous periods a positive stimulus for what feminist movements face today in terms of rejecting and not achieving the desired demands.

## **Objectives of the Present Study**

1. Acquiring knowledge about the political situation in which women lived.
2. Getting familiar with the election laws in previous periods.
3. Identifying the numbers of women who possessed political influence in the previous political system.

## **Concepts and Terminology**

### ***Affiliation***

Linguistically, It is derived from development (Salman, 2013). In English dictionaries, the word affiliation denotes the meaning of belonging, and it originally goes back to the word (Belong) which means the action belongs or is related to a close relationship and possesses social relations that allow integration into the group (University Duty Conference, 2018). It is affiliation that embodies the threads of loyalty that bind a person to what he/she belongs to, so he/she is associated and is attracted (Amara, 1997). It is also considered to be the true affiliation with religion and the homeland as a thought and its embodiment of the most powerful action, and the desire to reincarnate a certain membership, for the individual's love for that and pride in joining this thing (Nasir, 2002).

It is also defined as an integrated set of ideas, values, customs, and traditions with which the individual lives, and they remain for years to pass inside him/her until they turn into an intangible existence as if they were the air, he/she breathes but he/she does not see. Then, the circles of his/her belonging expand as the scope of that group of ideas, values, norms, and traditions expands. Belonging does not come through knowledge only, but it is formed through emotional and social experiences and through mutual necessary moral and material needs between the citizen and his/her country

(Salman, 2013).

Accordingly, affiliation is defined as everything that makes an individual feel his/her existence and belonging to. Leaving it and moving away from it causes problems, disturbances, and internal conflicts for him/her. The individual does not feel his/her presence outside the framework of the party to which he/she belongs, whether that affiliation is with a particular group, institution, or any other party that the individual feels that it complements him/her and his/her thoughts and beliefs.

## **Feminism**

Linguistically, Movement is defined as a departure from stillness. It is the movement of the body from one place to another or the movement of its parts, as in the movement of the mill.

The feminist movement is a political movement in its origins that aims at social goals represented in women's rights and proving themselves and their role. In general, feminist thought is a theory of concepts, issues and that describe and explain women's conditions and experiences, ways to improve and activate them, and how to make optimal use of them. Hence, feminism is an actual practical practice with in-kind goals. Thus, feminism began in the nineteenth century as a social movement that gave birth to a feminist thought (Al-Khouli, 2017).

It is also a political practice to liberate all women of the working classes, poor women, women with physical difficulties, and old women (Wendy, 2009). It is a social renaissance that aims to achieve a position for women, which is equal to that of men on the social, economic, and cultural levels. It is also called the Women Defence Association (Rudkar, 2019).

Thus, the feminist movement is every movement that deals with women's issues from a perspective that differs from what society looks at. It aims to find solutions to social, political, or economic problems that hinder women. The feminist movement also tries to create an independent entity for women to take into consideration that all women needs and demands are not seen as dependent or seen as a secondary thing in society at a time when they became half of society, if not all in some circumstances.

Feminism, which is centred around the female, is divided into two phases (Al-Massiri, 2002):

1. A stage in which the world is completely male-centred in order to dominate females, or the world is female-centred in order to dominate males.
2. A stage in which all ties and relationships dissolve and there is no difference between males and females, so there is no conflict between them and they dissolve into one entity and there is no such thing as male and female, but both are one.

## **Political Activity**

The linguistic concept of activity is derived from active (Dictionary of Language Weights). As for politics, it means leadership and managing the affairs of states. Political activity means contributing or cooperating in various aspects of human

activity. Political activity or political participation is part of the general system of society. This conviction is not separated from the political awareness resulting from the political culture and social upbringing that develops the spirit of participation and responsibility, which is not only a material act, but They represent values, emotions, a sense of belonging, the will to express, and a political right (Al-Salih, 2015).

The general concept of political participation is the participation of large numbers of individuals and groups in political life. It is defined as the activity carried out by ordinary citizens with the intention of influencing the governmental decision-making process. This activity may be individual or collective. It is organized, spontaneous, continuous, or intermittent, peaceful or violent, legal or illegal, effective or ineffective (Huntington, 1993). It also means the right to vote in elections, to be nominated for national and local elected councils, to participate in the membership of parties, unions, and organizations, and to have freedom of expression. It is divided into two parts (Baybars, 2011):

1. Formal political participation: It takes place through state institutions and its political, economic, and administrative decision-making bodies.
2. Informal political participation: It is the participation in the political process through parties, civil society organizations, associations, and political groupings.

Political activity can be defined as every movement, opinion, or intervention issued by an individual towards a particular political party in order to serve the society as a whole from a political point of view. This activity includes all official state institutions. It may also be carried out by an unofficial party that is not affiliated with a political party, as is the case in civil society organizations.

The issue of women is part of the issue of democracy in its broad sense. More precisely, it is part of the issue of national liberation itself. It is the essence of the content and centre of the issue of democracy in that broader and more comprehensive meaning. In other words, it is the freedom of the people with their social groups and classes (Matar, 1993).

The first attempt in this regard was launched by the journalist Paulina Hassoun that coincided with the convening of the first meeting of the Iraqi Constituent Assembly through an article entitled (At the Historic Incident) published in the sixth issue issued on March 15, 1924 of the magazine (Leila), which was issued at the time, in which she addressed Members of the Council and explained to them the situation of women and the backwardness they suffer from. Men bear the responsibility of being in control of the reins and keys. Then, the Council should defend the rights of Iraqi women. (Al-Kindi, 2016).

The magazine (Laila) also mentioned this trend in later issues by publishing articles dealing with women's political rights. Its insistence on this trend is significant in those circumstances. The seventh issue, which was issued on April 15, 1924, included an article entitled The attention of our deputies, every eye has a look. In this article, she reviewed the views of a number of members of the Constituent Assembly. Their opinions were supplemented in the eighth issue, which was issued on May 15, 1924, which included opinions on women's political rights, but the calls of Laila magazine clashed with the legislation of the electoral law of 1924, which confiscated

women's practice of their constitutional rights (Al-Hamadani, 1985).

The Iraqi Basic Law issued on March 21, 1925 did not differentiate between a woman and a man in political rights and even civil rights. It did not deprive Iraqi women of the right to vote as stated in Article (18) regarding this: (Iraqis are equal in possessing political and civil rights and public costs and duties (Al-Jeddah, 1998). In Article (37), it is indicated that the method of electing representatives is determined by a special law that takes into account the principles of secret voting. In the application of this article, the first law on the election of representatives was adopted. This law was previously ratified by the Constituent Assembly in 1924, among the principles of which is that the election is classified into two degrees. In other words, indirect election. It was determined that the voters are males only. This principle is contrary to the provisions of the Constitution (The Iraqi Basic Law, 1925).

It should be noted that the laws for electing representatives that were issued during the royal era are four laws. The first law was issued in 1924. The second law was issued in 1946. The third law a decree-law were issued in 1952. The only advantage of this decree-law was that it made the election direct. The fourth law was issued in 1954.

The aforementioned four electoral laws restricted freedom, in particular, deprived women of their constitutional political rights. Women did not possess as equal rights as men. This led them to face challenges and embark on persistent paths of struggle. It also led them to demand their political rights every time they found the appropriate opportunity to do so.

Despite the importance of the issue of women and the importance of their political participation, their right to vote was forbidden. Thus, equality on the basis of gender was not achieved. Rather, the aforementioned article denied women's political rights definitively by emphasizing only the male gender. Women were not granted political rights and remained deprived of Manifestations of political life, especially participation in elections. Electoral laws gave men the right to vote and be elected without women, which is considered a violation of the principle of democracy at the level of governance, as stated in the Law on the Election of Representatives of 1946 to emphasize this principle (the right of males to vote), as Article (2) stipulates that every Iraqi male who has completed his twenty years of age and whose name is not in the electoral register is considered a voter. Then, the same principle was emphasized in the Law on the Election of Representatives No. (53) of 1956. Article (2) defined the voter as an Iraqi male who has completed his twenty years of age and registered his name in the voters lists. In the monarchy stage, the legislation deprived women of the right to have political participation in the democratic system (Jawad, 2013).

Here, the question that imposes itself by emphasizing the participation of males only appears, which is whether it is stipulated that the males participating in the vote be educated so the legislative laws said No? Through this answer, the question arises. Is it not the duty and responsibility of the democratic system (as it describes itself) to work on raising the educational level of society and freeing it from illiteracy and backwardness? This is one of the conditions for achieving democracy. On the other hand, why did the democratic monarchy, at the end of its tenure and thirty-seven years after its establishment, express its desire to include the rights of educated women? Is it by virtue of the social mobility of women, especially since the mid-fifties? Or as a result

of the increase in the number of educated women? Or a desire to keep pace with developments in the rights of both genders?

Thus, during the royal era, the Iraqi women did not obtain their rights stipulated in the Iraqi constitution as half of society. The steps of women in this field were slow due to the strength of the opposition they faced in this aspect. The view that involves customs and traditions remained entrenched in the minds of the majority of officials in The Iraqi governments. It was reported that the Secretary of the League of Nations asked the Iraqi government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to explain the status of women from the civil and political perspectives in view of the Iraqi laws. The response of the Iraqi government indicated that regard to the right to vote in the National Assembly and in the administrative and municipal councils, it is limited to males only, and the right of membership in the National Assembly is also limited to males. As for the right of membership in the cabinet, it is not permissible for anyone to take the seat of the ministry except for those who are members of the National Council. Since membership in the Council is restricted to males, of course membership in the Ministry is limited to them as well. As for the right of employment, there are no texts in the Civil Service Law prohibiting the employment of females in government departments, but rather acceptance and permissibility of that. The law of Rulers and judges did not prohibit women from participating in the judiciary, but the matter is confusing about the legal oath in the case of judges. As for the civil rights and duties of a woman towards her husband, they are not concerned with special laws. The Iraqi government does so in accordance with Sharia and Islamic rulings.

Thus, the situation of Iraqi women in the political life did not differ from many societies before the political regimes followed slow policies regarding the development of women's political rights (Al-Mubarak, 2001). The stage after the revolution of July 17, 1968 witnessed a great decline in the political activity of Iraqi women. This is due to the domination of the one-party system and the imposition of urbanization on all political activities, regardless of the activities of the ruling party. This stage witnessed the ideologization of the Iraqi society with the one-party ideology represented by the Arab Socialist Baath Party, in addition to imposing a ban on any party, political or any activity, gathering and organization outside this framework. As far as women's political work is concerned, attempts have emerged by the Baath Party to contain the activities and aspirations of political women through the General Union of Iraqi Women, which was established in 1969. This union was the sole spokesperson and representative of Iraqi women both outside and inside Iraq (Al-Bayyati, 2007). Hence, it is clear that there is a loss of women's political participation and the sacrifices that they made and achieved in previous periods, which represents a defeat for the feminist movement and its activism.

In 1968, many incidents were witnessed. They represented violations of women's political rights. This was shown by hundreds of evidence recorded by Amnesty International and impartial non-governmental organizations. These violations represented a clear violation of laws, constitution, and international norms. Life Sentences and Death Sentence are taken against any person whose affiliation with any party other than the Baath Party is proven. The Iraqi woman had a share of these penalties by implementing such rulings against a large number of those who were proven to belong to other parties. An example of this is what a women affiliated with the Communist Party faced (Khudhair, 2007). This was the reason why the Iraqi Women's League affiliated with the Communist Party, which sacrificed many of its

leadership staff for the sake of women's dignity and people's rights held its fourth conference in Beirut in 1981. This conference was concluded with a statement condemning the previous regime's arrest of fifty-five women (Zangana , 2008).

The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party viewed women in terms of political participation from a superficial view (Al-Siraji, 2003). This regime was able to impose its vision on women's political participation from a partisan and ideological perspective for a period of (35) years (Davies, 2008). Everything that the Baath Party advocated for equality and women's rights did not go beyond the formal aspect. This is evident by following the formations of the national and country leaderships of the party, considering the composition of the members of the regional leadership of the party in Iraq. In the period (1952-1970), there was Absolutely no feminist component, as was the case for members of the party's national leadership for the period (1954-1970). The situation continued as it was until 1999 (Batatu, 2006).

The laws that pertain and guarantee the right of women's political participation remained theoretical before the law and not in the law. What was given on one side is taken on the other. The provisional constitution in 1970 permitted formal equality for women with a non-appealed clause. However, the laws enacted were nullified by the orders of the Revolutionary Command Council, which is a clear and severe violation of the main provisions of the 1970 constitution, including the non-appealed clause. Women's participation in activities and political and public life was few and limited under the Baath regime. During that period, women did not assume any influential leadership positions (The Law Development Project in Iraq, 2006). This matter was clearly demonstrated in the National Council Law No. (55) of 1980, which stipulated that nomination to the National Council would be restricted to members of the ruling party and its loyalists only. In 1989, a new condition was added to Law No. (55) stipulating the obligation of the candidate's loyalty to the National Assembly (Aziz, et al., 2013). Law No. (26) of 1995 indicates this matter. Despite the issuance of all previous laws and legislation, the first participation of women in political life was in 1980. Much of the literature refers to the right of women to nominate and vote to this year, which is the year for women to occupy 16 seats in the Iraqi parliament out of (250) (Muthanna, 2019).

In 1980, women participated in the election or in the nomination in the first session of the Council in the legislative elections. The percentage of women's participation reached (6.4%) through which they won (16) seats out of a total of (250) seats (Al-Siraji, 2003).

In the second legislative election cycle in 1985, the percentage of women's representation increased, reaching (13.2%) and they won (33) seats out of (250). In the third session in 1989, the percentage of women's representation decreased to (10.8%) and they got (27) seats out of (250) (Salih, 2010). Once again, the percentage of women's political participation fell in 1990 to (11%). It also fell in 2000 to (8%).

Through the mentioned percentages, it is clear how low the percentage of women's political participation was at that time. This can be traced back to the nature of the regime, taking into account the controls that stipulated that Iraqi women who do not belong to the ruling party may not participate in such elections.

When explaining the small number of women who possessed political influence

in the ruling political system 1968-2003, they can be traced back to social structures and how they hindered women's access to political positions. There are many obstacles that limit awareness of women's rights. This lack of awareness can be attributed to gender-based socialization, which caused discrimination against women and their candidacy for leadership positions in political parties. In general, there was male dominance in the public sphere and women's dedication to the private sphere, so gender-based upbringing made the role of motherhood a primary and main role for women (Hindi, 1997).

The absence of the real role of women, which expresses feminine diversity in Iraq, constituted a milestone in the Iraqi political scene 1968-2003, despite the confirmation of women's presence in the media and in theory. Thus, the chance of her success in parliamentary and political work was little due to her inability to achieve progress in reaching senior positions (Al-Jawahiri, 2011).

What is surprising is that Iraq in this period ratified many international treaties related to women's rights. This ratification represented the great contradiction between the political situation that was imposed on women by the previous regime, and the provisions that came in these agreements. It is clear that the signing of these agreements is for international media reasons only. Among the treaties and agreements that were signed is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was ratified in Law No. (94) of 1975, in addition to the Convention of Abolition of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - CEDAW, which was approved in Law No. (66) of 1986 (Al-Awadi, 2009).

## **The Results**

The present study reached the following results:

1. Women lived with no participation in the political situation. They were monopolized by women that were close to the ruling class.
2. Election laws indicated the possibility of women's participation and belonging to the party they wanted, but the application of these laws was the opposite.
3. The numbers of women possessing political influence was very little, as political work was the preserve of men and the few women close to the ruling class at that time.

## **Recommendations**

1. Paying attention and shedding light on the struggle of women for their beliefs in the previous periods.
2. Competent authorities must increase the numbers of women participating in political activities.
3. Paying attention to women's movements, whose purpose is to defend women's legitimate rights in the Islamic religion and the constitution, and financially and morally financing these movements by the state.

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