



Mozn Hassan / Nazra for Feminist Studies

Mozn Hassan is an Egyptian feminist and human rights defender. Nazra for Feminist Studies, the organisation she founded in 2007, has documented human rights violations and coordinated the response to the alarming number of sexual assaults on women participating in public protests during and after the Egyptian revolution of 2011, ensuring that survivors received medical, psychological and legal support. Additionally, Nazra engaged in coalitions of women's groups who successfully lobbied for the inclusion of women's rights in Egypt's 2014 Constitution and ensured the passage of amendments to the Egyptian Penal Code to include sexual harassment and expand the definition of sexual crimes. Believing that feminism and gender are political and social issues affecting freedom and development in all societies, Hassan and Nazra mentor young women in politics, including candidates for parliamentary, municipal and union elections from across Egypt's political spectrum. They also organise an annual Feminist School that introduces young men and women to gender issues.

Strengthening an Egyptian feminist movement for the 21st century

Born in 1979, Mozn Hassan completed her diploma in civil society and human rights at Cairo University and received a Masters' Degree in international human rights law at the American University of Cairo. She subsequently joined ten other young Egyptian activists to found Nazra for Feminist Studies, a group that nurtures young feminists and aims to contribute to the continuity and development of the Egyptian and regional feminist movement in the Middle East and North Africa. During the Egyptian revolution of 2011, Hassan and her colleagues remained in Tahrir Square, day and night, joining the call for freedom and democracy for all Egyptians.

Since its founding, Nazra, which today has 20 staff members, has been working to build the capacity of nearly a dozen feminist groups across Egypt with the aim of building a decentralised feminist movement in Egypt. They also contribute to the production of knowledge, documenting feminists' stories and producing position papers on the gender situation to strengthen the feminist movement.

Through its unique Women's Political Participation Academy, Nazra mentors female candidates from several political parties to enhance women's political participation. Simultaneously Nazra interacts with labour unions, professional syndicates, student unions and groups, political movements, and local councils to integrate women's issues in their work and support female candidates standing for positions in these institutions. During the 2011 parliamentary elections, Nazra succeeded in supporting 16 women candidates from



underprivileged parts of Egypt and empowered them to run for election. Despite overwhelming challenges, one of these women was elected to parliament. Another woman assisted by Nazra set up a union for bread sellers in 2011 in Suez and remains actively involved in running it. Nazra also mentored five female candidates in 2015 parliamentary elections, one of them becoming a member of parliament.

Nazra's unique annual Feminist Schools held since 2013 introduced young women and men selected from throughout Egypt to gender issues. These schools have taken up issues that are often taboo in Egypt, such as personal freedoms rights.

Nazra uses a number of creative methods involving young people to address prejudices in Egyptian society. For example, in 2014, they worked with a theatre company to produce a play on the meaning of masculinity, and they continue to use visual art and comedy to communicate complex issues of feminism to the general public. They have produced a feminist comic book and mentored a group of young women to start a feminist music band.

Responding to sexual assault occurring during protests and in public spaces

Hassan believes that upholding bodily integrity lies at the core of Nazra's work. Nazra documented human rights violations occurring during and after the 2011 revolution, and became alarmed at the systematic sexual assaults on women that became a widespread phenomenon. Hassan and Nazra supported grassroots groups rescuing women subjected to violence from Tahrir Square, and focused on taking up a coordination role to ensure that they received medical, psychological and legal assistance.

Nazra has arranged for the physical relocation of over a dozen survivors of rape and threatened women human rights defenders since 2012, and has provided direct psychological and medical support for over 60 survivors of sexual assault. It has also provided legal support to over 100 survivors of sexual harassment and women human rights defenders arrested for participating in peaceful protests. Nazra runs an emergency hotline for survivors of sexual assault, and their legal team has contributed to some notable victories in the courtrooms against perpetrators of sexual assault and sexual harassment, thus advancing women's rights in Egypt. At a time of political turbulence, Nazra has stood out for documenting human rights violations and defending women's rights without fear or favour regardless of the survivors and victims' political affiliation.

Hassan is one of the first persons from Egyptian civil society to be interrogated and to have official charges directed against her in Case 173 of 2011, known as the "Foreign Funding Case," where she and Nazra are being investigated for illegally accepting foreign funding under a draconian Hosni Mubarak era law designed to restrain civil society. She was



subsequently prevented from leaving Egypt to attend an international meeting in June 2016 based on a travel ban ordered by the general prosecutor. These measures have been described as being part of an attempt to crack down on Egypt's independent civil society and have been harshly criticised by international human rights groups including Amnesty International and Front Line Defenders. Fourteen Egyptian feminist groups came together to express solidarity with Nazra, stating that they see any threat to Nazra as a threat to the Egyptian feminist movement, both its present and its past.

Advocating for reforms at the national and international levels

Nazra played a pivotal role as part of a coalition of women's rights groups that ensured the inclusion of women's rights in the Egyptian Constitution following the revolution. In 2014, Nazra was part of a coalition that successfully lobbied for amendments to the Egyptian Penal Code that expanded the definition of sexual crimes. For the first time in Egypt, men were recognised in the definition of survivors of sexual crimes, and sexual harassment was criminalised. Hassan and Nazra continue to work on mainstreaming women's issues in legislation and policies, engaging with different state institutions including the National Council for Women, National Council for Human Rights and Ministry of Justice. They have also lobbied the Ministry of the Interior, successfully advocating for the creation of a unit dedicated to combating violence against women within the Egyptian police. Hassan and Nazra also advocate for human rights at the international level, and have taken up difficult issues such as violence against women, and discrimination during Egypt's Universal Periodic Reviews at the UN Human Rights Council in 2014, where Nazra's engagement with the UN Commission on the Status of Women led the Arab League and Egyptian National Council for Women to commit to adopting a strategy to combat violence against women.

Hassan and fellow activists established the Women Human Rights Defenders in Middle East and North Africa coalition in March 2015 to collectively respond to common concerns and problems in a highly polarised regional context. In 2016, a Caucus for Women Politicians in the Arab Region was also established.

Honours

In 2013, Hassan received the Global Fund for Women's inaugural Charlotte Bunch Human Rights Award.