

Abeer Sawalqa Success in life despite her husband's imprisonment

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The case of Ms. Abeer Sawalqa (35 years of age) is perhaps a paragon of steadfastness and rebellion against the injustices of society. In her we find a spirit of defiance and rebellion against her adverse circumstances, and a determination to prove she has the strength to succeed. She has raised her five children alone following the sentencing of her husband to imprisonment in a revenge killing case. She was forced to leave her hometown of Tafileh in Jordan based on *al-Jilwa*, a tribal law that compels the family of the killer to leave their homes and relocate to a different area.

Nothing that has happened to Abeer Sawalqa, the poor financial situation of her family, or the fact that she is living off the salary of her husband – who was pensioned off following his imprisonment – have weakened her resolve. She sent her daughter to university immediately after graduating from secondary school to spare her what she herself went through due to her lack of education. The simple responses of Abeer, who is also known as “Im Jihad”, provide us with a critical perspective of women's organisations, of their shortcomings and their reliance on external appearances. Im Jihad also takes a critical view of the participation of women in politics and the labour market, and she is informed to some extent about the problems faced by women in general. It appears from the case of Im Jihad that a sense of injustice is one of the most important drivers of a person's hidden potential.

The interview

What does reform mean to you as a citizen?

It means the improvement of everything in all aspects of life.

And what does reform mean to you as a woman?

Reform of my financial status.

What do you think is the most important thing in need of reform in Jordan?

The economic conditions of the people.

What is your view of the status of women in Jordan?

In terms of work, their status is not good and there is still need for improvement. Politically speaking, despite the fact that a number of women have assumed political office, the foundation remains weak. The status of women is very poor in terms of the economy; women are still subject to the authority of men, and

although they earn salaries they cannot dispose of them freely. In fact, the workload of women has increased both inside and outside the home. Socially, as I think you're aware, women remain under the control of the family even after marriage. Their movements are calculated and monitored. Our lives are difficult. As far as the family is concerned, women have a double burden, which is amplified by the fact that they bear responsibility for anything that may go wrong in the family.

What would you demand for women in Jordan?

Improvement in their economic status. This would help them to improve their own situation and that of their families.

What are the main problems you encounter as a woman?

The way that women are viewed as inferior, the restrictions that are placed on their freedom, the economic situation, and their responsibilities in the family and the workplace.

And do you face these problems because you are a woman, or might men also encounter them?

It's because I am a woman, of course. A man has the freedom to act as he wishes, to come and go, to work and spend his money even if he neglects his family, because he is a man. And a man has guardianship over a woman even if she is older than him.

What is your view of women's rights movements?

They do not have an effective presence. Although they exist, their impact is limited and doesn't extend to all women.