

# Laila Magazine and Its Impact on the Advancement of Iraqi Women

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## ABSTRACT

Layla (1923–1925), Iraq's inaugural women's magazine, was a pioneering publication that significantly influenced the advancement of Iraqi women during the early 20th century. Founded by Paulina Hassoun, a Jordanian-born journalist and educator, Layla served as a platform for advocating women's rights, education, and social reform in a period marked by national transformation and emerging feminist consciousness. The magazine's editorial mission, encapsulated in its slogan "On the Way to the Revival of the Iraqi Woman," encompassed a diverse range of topics, including science, art, literature, sociology, child-rearing, and home economics. It played a crucial role in promoting gender equality by addressing issues such as girls' education, family health, and women's financial independence. Notably, Layla published works by renowned Iraqi poets like al-Rasafi and al-Zahawi, and featured an editorial in May 1924 urging the Constituent Iraqi Assembly to grant women their rights. Despite its brief existence, with only 20 issues published between October 1923 and August 1925, Layla left an indelible mark on the Iraqi women's movement. It catalyzed the formation of the Women's Awakening Club in 1923, Iraq's first women's organization, and inspired subsequent generations to continue the struggle for women's rights. Paulina Hassoun's legacy endures as a testament to the transformative power of media in advancing social change.

**Keywords:** Awakening, Hassoun's, Encompassed, Advancement.

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## Introduction

Iraqi feminist journalism represents an important cultural and intellectual tributary in the history of Iraqi media, having played a pivotal role in shaping societal awareness and guiding public opinion toward women's issues and problems. Since their early beginnings in the early twentieth century, these media outlets have sought to break the social and cultural constraints surrounding Iraqi women and worked to change the prevailing stereotypical image of them in society..

Iraqi feminist journalism has taken upon itself the responsibility of enlightenment and education, serving as a window through which Iraqi women view the rapidly changing world. These publications have strived to raise the level of awareness among Iraqi women and strengthen their position in society by raising issues related to their rights to education, employment, and political participation, in addition to addressing social, health, and cultural topics of interest to women..

Laila magazine has been a shining example in the history of Iraqi feminist journalism, distinguished by its bold approach and sober approach to addressing women's issues. Since its founding, the magazine has embraced a progressive vision that seeks to empower Iraqi women and enhance their role in building society. Laila has succeeded in attracting an elite group of female writers and intellectuals who have contributed to enriching the magazine's intellectual and cultural content, making it an influential platform in the Iraqi media arena..

The role played by Iraqi feminist journalism extends beyond the transmission of information and the dissemination of news. It encompasses awareness-raising, shaping public opinion, and guiding it toward women's issues. These

publications have contributed to creating a state of intellectual and cultural dynamism that has positively impacted the lives of Iraqi women, helping them break free from the shackles of ignorance and backwardness, and propelling them toward active participation in building society..

### **First: The issuance of Layla magazine and the most prominent topics it covered**

Layla magazine was issued in Iraq on October 15, 1923, influenced by Al-Fatat magazine.<sup>(1)</sup>In Egypt, it was issued by Mrs. Paulina Hassoun.<sup>(2)</sup>When Paulina Hassoun lived in Jordan, she deeply learned about the history of feminist journalism in the Arab world and was influenced by its important role in society. This learning was a strong motivation for her. When she moved to Iraq, she carried with her this rich experience and expertise in the field of Arab feminist journalism. She was inspired by her experience in Jordan and decided to establish a magazine specifically for it, benefiting from her deep knowledge of feminist journalism and its importance in empowering women and conveying their voice in Arab society. Her vision stemmed from her awareness of the importance of having a media platform that expresses women's issues and supports their rights in Iraqi society.<sup>(3)</sup>

The first issue of Layla magazine was published on October 15, 1923 AD. It is a monthly feminist magazine that discusses matters related to science, knowledge, art, literature, society, and the history of feminist movements.<sup>(4)</sup> It contained 48 pages printed at the Modern Printing House in Baghdad, Ras Al-Qarya, on Al-Rashid Street.<sup>(5)</sup>Its slogan, "For the Renaissance of Iraqi Women," was written on its inner cover.<sup>(6)</sup>

Layla mentioned on its front page that the subscription to the magazine was set at twelve rupees, in addition to Layla magazine's gratitude to King Faisal I who encouraged the opening of such trends that support the rights of Iraqi women.<sup>(7)</sup>The first issue of the magazine clearly thanked him, saying: "I am honored to express my sincere thanks for the great blessing that he bestowed upon me to support the women's literary renaissance in blessed Iraq."<sup>(8)</sup>

Paulina Hassoun mentioned in her first issue the reason for naming her magazine "Layla" and not any other names, as she said, "As a result of my arrival, I was invited to give a speech at the party held on June 10, 1923 to honor the

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<sup>(1)</sup>Al-Fatat magazine was founded by Hind Noufal in Alexandria in 1892, and was the first Egyptian women's magazine published monthly in Arabic. It focused on publishing women's writings and their issues in society, and covered a variety of topics in literature, culture, and education. The magazine contributed to encouraging women to write and express their opinions, and played an important role in the Egyptian women's renaissance movement. For details, see: George Kallas, *The Feminist Intellectual Movement in the Renaissance Era 1849-1928*, Dar Al-Jeel for Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon, 1996, p. 254

<sup>(2)</sup>Paulina Hassoun (1895–1969) was an Iraqi journalist from the prominent Hassoun family of Mosul. She was a cousin of the writer Salim Hassoun, owner of the Al-Alam Al-Arabi newspaper. In her youth, she moved between Egypt, Palestine, and Jordan before returning to Iraq in 1922. Her father was Iraqi and her mother was Syrian. She distinguished herself as a pioneer of feminist journalism in Iraq by launching "Layla" magazine on October 15, 1923, the first Iraqi feminist magazine. She also founded the first women's club in Iraq called "The Women's Renaissance Club" on November 24, 1923. After publishing 20 issues of the magazine, it was discontinued due to pressure from conservatives and she left Baghdad for Jordan in December 1925. She died in 1969, leaving behind an important journalistic and literary legacy. For details, see: Doreen Ingrams, *The Rising Stars of Iraq: The Story of the Iraqi Women's Struggle for Liberation, Development and Progress*, translated by Salim Taha Al-Tikriti and Burhan Al-Tikriti, Dar Al-Usur Publications, Baghdad, Iraq, 1985, p. 135.

<sup>(3)</sup>Layla Magazine, Issue (12), October 15, 1923, p. 4.

<sup>(4)</sup>Feminist Movements: Feminist movements emerged in Europe as a social and political movement aimed at achieving gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women. Its earliest roots began in the late eighteenth century with the writings of the French thinker Olympe de Gouges, who advocated for women's rights during the French Revolution. The movement developed in the nineteenth century with the emergence of key thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft in Britain, who wrote about women's rights and education. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the feminist movement emerged in a more organized form through the women's suffrage movement in Britain and the United States. Thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir emerged, offering a profound philosophical view of women in her book "The Second Sex." Feminist movements posed a radical challenge to the traditional social and political structures that had restricted women's rights for centuries. For details, see: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated by Vian Mansour, Dar Naram Sin, Baghdad, Iraq, 2022, 3rd ed., pp. 5-15.

<sup>(2)</sup>Shukriya Kokzkhedr Nasser Al-Sarraj, *Women's Journalism in Iraq and its Development 1923-1990*, College of Arts, University of Baghdad, 1999 AD, p. 78.

<sup>(3)</sup>Layla Magazine, Issue (11), May 3, 1923, p. 1.

<sup>(7)</sup>During the reign of King Faisal I, Iraq witnessed significant steps in supporting women's rights, despite the relative limitations of that period. King Faisal sought to modernize Iraqi society and open the way for women to education and community participation. He issued laws that contributed to improving the status of women, such as allowing female education and opening women's schools for the first time in Iraq's history. He supported the establishment of women's associations and newspapers that focused on women's issues, such as Layla magazine. He also encouraged women's participation in public life and urged their education and economic and social empowerment. Although these steps were limited by modern standards, they represented a qualitative shift at the time towards improving the status of Iraqi women. For details, see: Abdul Razzaq Al-Hilali, *History of Education in Iraq during the British Mandate Era 1921-1932*, Al-Hamra Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon, 2017, pp. 130-135.

<sup>(8)</sup>Layla Magazine, Issue (1), First Year, October 1923, p. 1.

great poet Karim Sidqi al-Zahawi <sup>(1)</sup>**And there, for the first time, I heard the venerable professor chanting his poetry with eagerness and shouting, “I am infatuated with Layla, and she is my homeland, and I will spend my love for her in love.” So the two words, Layla and homeland, descended upon my heart like a revelation, and I rushed to decorate the magazine with the name Layla. It had been in my mind before I went to the party to name her “The Girl of Iraq.”**<sup>(2)</sup>

It seems that Paulina Hassoun chose the name "Laila" rather than the word "homeland" despite her recognition and pride in the two words "homeland" and "Laila" when she heard them. However, she chose Laila because it is a name that denotes a woman, and since the magazine is feminist, that name is consistent with its ideology.

As for the magazine's sections, it contained several other sections, including a discussion of housewives that included health and educational benefits for children, a section on Umm Rushd's recipes that included topics on the role of the ideal mother in the family, and a section on the Trumpet of Truth that included topics criticizing the customs and traditions of Iraqi society, as she addressed those who ridicule women and do not give them their due status, as she once said in that section, “O ignorant one, why do you think highly of yourself and belittle women?”<sup>(3)</sup> The section “The Trumpet of the Strings” received the lion's share of letters from both male and female readers, and received special attention because it included choosing the right husband and how to establish a successful family.<sup>(4)</sup>

Issa Effendi, one of the most famous merchants in Baghdad at that time, sent a letter that included: “Her Excellency, the distinguished lady, owner of Laila magazine, greetings and respect. I cannot but praise your distinguished magazine for the topics it contains, striving to advance the nation and refine the environment. What came in the fourth issue of the magazine in the right strings' horn under the title: Is it a bargain or a deception?” is an example of the categories that you publish successively. Since the topic is of great importance, I saw that I should thank you profusely.”<sup>(5)</sup>

## Second: The most important topics covered by the magazine

### 1- In the field of art

One of the sections that Laila magazine was clearly interested in was “The Section of Strange News and Strange News.” This section, unlike any other, answered intellectual, political, industrial, and philosophical questions (who, what, when, where, why, and how), in addition to the elements of suspense and strangeness. Therefore, it was edited in a simple and understandable way, written in the clear language of journalism. In this section, it relied on news from agencies, newspapers, and translation. Among the news that it published about “the industrial thunderbolt” <sup>(6)</sup>

I also published another news item under the title “The Music Genius” and it was Mozart.<sup>(7)</sup>The Austrian child prodigy who astonished the world with his extraordinary musical talent was a unique phenomenon in the history of classical music. From an early age, he displayed exceptional abilities that made him a living legend in his time and for generations to come. He attended a performance of complex church music in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. It was strictly forbidden to copy the music or take it out of the chapel. After hearing it just once, Mozart returned to his hotel and wrote the entire score from memory, with all the minute details of the multiple voices. This achievement

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<sup>(1)</sup>Karim Sidqi al-Zahawi (1863-1936) was a contemporary Iraqi intellectual and writer who worked in journalism and media in Baghdad. He contributed to the Iraqi cultural scene through his writings and articles. Among his published works is the book "Wings of Poetry", published by the General Directorate of Cultural Affairs in Baghdad. His writing style is characterized by combining authenticity and modernity. For details, see: Youssef Ezz El-Din, Iraqi Poets in the Twentieth Century, Part 1, Asaad Press for Publishing and Distribution, Baghdad, Iraq, 1969, pp. 11-30.

<sup>(3)</sup> Quoted from Shukria Kokaz, the previous source, p. 80.

<sup>(3)</sup> Quoted from Laila Magazine, Issue (1), previous source, p. 5.

<sup>(4)</sup>Laila Magazine, Issue (13), December 5, 1923, p. 4.

<sup>(1)</sup> Laila Magazine, Issue (12), previous source, p. 12.

<sup>(2)</sup> The news included that the United States of America was seeking to experiment with an artificial lightning bolt with an electrical power of two million watts, and during its lightning strike it burned a village built of wood. For more details, see: Laila Magazine, Issue (19), May 24, 1924 AD, pp. 3-7.

<sup>(3)</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Mozart was born in Salzburg in 1756. He was famous for his early musical genius and his innovations in the field of opera and symphonies. He composed many immortal classical works such as Symphony No. 40 and the opera Don Giovanni. Mozart died at the young age of 35, leaving behind a great musical legacy that influenced the development of classical music. For more details, see: John Finley, History of Art, translated by Rabi' Al-Tarboush, Adnan Publishing and Distribution House, Baghdad, Iraq, 2023 AD, pp. 188-190.

astounded everyone and confirmed his exceptional abilities.<sup>1)</sup> Another topic covered by Laila magazine is Beethoven, the arrogant musician.<sup>2)</sup> This unique musical genius was a unique personality who combined exceptional talent with a complex personality. He was known for his musical genius that changed the face of classical music forever, and at the same time he was famous for his arrogance and excessive self-confidence.<sup>3)</sup>

Beethoven's genius was manifested in his extraordinary ability to create musical innovation. He was capable of creating complex and profound melodies that conveyed powerful and diverse human emotions. His nine symphonies, in particular, are considered among the greatest achievements in the history of music. Each one was a musical world in itself, carrying a unique and profound artistic vision. The Ninth Symphony, which he wrote while completely deaf, is considered an exceptional masterpiece that embodies the pinnacle of his creativity and genius.<sup>4)</sup>

But this unique genius was accompanied by a complex and difficult personality. Beethoven was known for his extreme arrogance and excessive self-confidence. He considered himself superior to his musical contemporaries, and he often expressed this feeling frankly and clearly. Once, when a nobleman criticized his performance, Beethoven responded angrily, saying: "There are thousands of princes, but there is only one Beethoven."<sup>5)</sup>

Beethoven's ordeal with hearing loss was another factor that contributed to the complexity of his personality. He began to gradually lose his hearing in his late twenties, and by the end of his life he was completely deaf. This ordeal, which was catastrophic for a musician, increased his isolation and made him more withdrawn and lonely in his dealings with others. However, this suffering also deepened his musical creativity, as it pushed him to explore inner musical worlds that he would not have accessed without this harsh experience.<sup>6)</sup>

Ultimately, Beethoven's arrogance and his genius were two sides of the same coin. It was his strong belief in his talent and the importance of his artistic message that drove him to challenge musical boundaries and create timeless works that changed the face of music forever. Despite his personal difficulties, his musical legacy remains a testament to a unique genius who was able to leave an indelible mark on the history of art and human culture.<sup>7)</sup>

## **2- In the field of women.**

Another topic published by Unwan magazine is "The Real Woman." Women have a high status and privileges, especially those they have attained in exchange for the distractions of motherhood and raising children. If some women take that saying literally and build their edifice of glory on giving birth to children and breastfeeding them alone, then they are clearly misguided. Because giving birth and breastfeeding are natural for women, whether they are rational or not, they do not deserve a high status because of them. Moreover, many of Eve's daughters do not give birth, and yet they may rise to a higher status and greater honor in exchange for the noble good deeds they do for humanity.<sup>8)</sup>

It seems that Laila magazine sought to clarify an intellectual fallacy in Iraqi society, criticizing a society that doesn't believe in women's capabilities and often tries to convince them that giving birth is their greatest achievement. In reality, however, achievement isn't measured by childbirth alone. There are women who haven't given birth, but their status in society is elevated thanks to their successes and accomplishments.

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(1) Laila Magazine, Issue (12), previous source, p. 24.

(2) Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was a German musician and composer. He was born in Bonn and died in Vienna in 1827. He is considered one of the greatest composers in Western history and one of the most important figures in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras. He began his musical career as a skilled pianist before becoming famous as a composer who created symphonies, concertos, piano sonatas, string quartets, and operas. He gradually became deaf starting in his late twenties, but he continued composing until the end of his life, relying on his experience and inner sense. His music was characterized by emotional depth, technical complexity, and innovation in form and style. He influenced many later musicians, and his works are still played and studied to this day. He is considered a symbol of creative genius and overcoming personal adversity. For more details, see: Tharwat Okasha, Renaissance Arts, Egyptian General Book Authority, Cairo, Egypt, 2011, 3rd ed., p. 102.

(3) Laila Magazine, Issue (14), July 7, 1924, p. 25.

(4) The same source, p. 26.

(1) Laila Magazine, Issue (15), September 18, 1924, p. 28.

(2) The same source, p. 29.

(7) The same source, p. 30.

(8) Laila Magazine, Issue (3), First Year, December 15, 1923, pp. 26-27

### **3- In the field of education**

Another important topic that Laila magazine covered was “A Look at the Art of Raising Children.” The magazine pointed out that the art of raising children is a noble and modern art that has attracted the attention of thinkers and social scientists, as the people of advanced countries have rushed to establish nurseries and kindergartens for children based on modern principles established by modern specialists after they conducted modern experiments in how to raise children, which has led to every nation competing with the other in excelling in the mastery of raising children in different ways.<sup>1)</sup>

The magazine covered other topics such as “The Endowments Girls’ School.” The magazine indicated that the Ministry of Endowments will establish a girls’ school in one of Baghdad’s neighborhoods, which is news that brought joy to the hearts of the rest of the girls’ schools, as it was a very rare thing in Iraq. The Ministry of Education published an official report in the newspapers, which included clear criticism of the state budget, which reflected the small number of schools, especially girls’ schools. We hope to see a greater and stronger movement from the nation in the pursuit of this vital issue, as the deficiency in the refinement of the girl, who is an integral part of the nation’s body, and the great weakness in her social life, and a complete delay in her path of progress, is one of our most sacred duties to demand that the nation pay attention to the refinement of girls and make every sacrifice for their education. Is it permissible, for example, that there are only a few elementary and middle schools in Baghdad, while the smallest cities in advanced countries contain more, greater and more sophisticated schools?<sup>2)</sup> Laila magazine emerged as an important platform for addressing these vital issues and shedding light on the importance of women's education and its role in the advancement of society as a whole. This pioneering magazine realized that empowering women through education is the best way to build a balanced and advanced society.<sup>3)</sup>

The magazine also addressed the issue of gender equality in education, emphasizing the need to provide equal opportunities for girls and boys at all educational levels. It called for reviewing curricula to ensure they are free of any gender stereotypes, and to encourage girls to enroll in scientific and technological specializations, which are often dominated by men. Laila magazine was keen to devote a large space to discussing women's education issues in an in-depth and comprehensive manner. It published numerous articles and studies that addressed various aspects of this topic, starting with the challenges facing girls' education in rural areas, through the importance of eradicating women's illiteracy, and ending with the need to open the way for women to enroll in various scientific and literary specializations in universities.<sup>4)</sup>

These articles contributed to creating societal awareness about the importance of women's education, not only as a basic right, but also as a necessity for the advancement of society as a whole. An educated woman is the foundation of a healthy family and is capable of raising an aware and cultured generation that contributes to building and advancing the nation. Through its pages, Laila magazine highlighted successful models of Iraqi women who were able to achieve great accomplishments in the fields of science, literature, and art, thanks to their access to educational opportunities. These models have been a source of inspiration for girls and women throughout Iraq, motivating them to pursue education and knowledge.<sup>5)</sup>

The magazine also extensively discussed the positive effects of women's education on society as a whole. Studies published have shown that a higher level of women's education is closely linked to improved health, economic, and social indicators for society. Educated women are more aware of the importance of healthcare for themselves and their children, and are able to contribute effectively to family income and improve their standard of living. The magazine did not overlook the family's role in supporting girls' education, devoting many articles to raising awareness among parents about the importance of encouraging their daughters to continue their education and providing them with the appropriate environment to study and excel. It also discussed ways to overcome the

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(2) Shukria Cooks, the previous source, p. 83.

(1) Laila Magazine, Issue (5), Second Year, May 15, 1923, p. 4.

(2) The same source, p. 5.

(3) The same source, p. 6.

(1) Laila Magazine, Issue (8), March 23, 1923, p. 6.



financial obstacles that may prevent girls from enrolling in schools, proposing innovative solutions such as establishing scholarship funds and providing safe transportation for female students. In this context, Laila magazine addressed the issue of vocational and technical education for girls, emphasizing its importance in empowering women economically and opening up new horizons for them in the labor market. It called for the need to expand the scope of training programs targeting women, especially in fields that align with the needs of the local and regional labor market.<sup>1)</sup>

Laila magazine did not merely address social issues; it also sought to offer practical and realistic solutions. It called for the enactment of legislation and laws that guarantee girls' right to education, and demanded the allocation of greater resources to build schools and provide educational supplies, especially in remote and rural areas. It also encouraged the creation of literacy programs targeting older women, emphasizing that there is never too late to learn and acquire knowledge.<sup>2)</sup>

In a related context, the magazine did not neglect to discuss the cultural and social challenges that may hinder women's education in some conservative societies. It devoted many articles to addressing misconceptions about the role of women and the importance of their education, based on scientific and religious evidence that affirms women's right to seek knowledge and information.<sup>3)</sup>

### Second: The difficulties faced by the magazine

Laila magazine faced many difficulties and campaigns from readers and journalists. After several issues were published, the authoritarian male society asked: What does Laila want? Al-Mufid newspaper published:<sup>4)</sup> She launched a severe criticism against Paulina Hassoun, the principal of Bab al-Sheikh School, so the Al-Alam Al-Arabi newspaper (<sup>5)</sup> By publishing the denial of the claimant, Paulina was asked not to panic or hesitate, and then Al-Alam Al-Arabi published another word in response to Al-Mufid magazine, in which she confirmed that Paulina Hassoun is an Iraqi woman who returned to her country and carried in her heart the determination to provide services to her Iraqi sisters, adding in his article that there is no justification for some to rush to slander and defame the magazine and its owner.<sup>6)</sup>

One of the women, Saadia Al-Khalil, one of the writers in Laila magazine, wrote in support of Paulina Hassoun and denounced what was stated in Al-Mofid newspaper. The campaign confirmed that Paulina Hassoun does not know how to write five lines. She does not write and cannot write. It was not heard that she wrote, and no one saw her write a single line. Rather, they saw booklets with the title Laila magazine, and they took it to be hers. Paulina Hassoun wrote a word under the title (To everyone who reads the newspapers). The word was characterized by sublimity and transcendence of the severe campaigns she faced and her strong determination to continue working. My determination will not waver, and I will not cling to my efforts due to what some say about me or what they seek in the newspapers. I do not care about those attacks. Whoever wants to believe, and whoever wants to lie, can lie. As for me, I do not care about what is said, and I did not ask my cousin Ahmed Al-Rawi, the director of Laila magazine, or anyone else to defend me. Rather, I extend my thanks to all those whose noble souls led them to struggle for the

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(2) The same source, p. 7.

(3) Shukria Cooks, the previous source, p. 84.

(1) Shukria Cooks, the previous source, p. 84.

(2) Al-Mufid Newspaper: It was published on April 11, 1922, by its owner Ibrahim Hilmi Al-Omar, to replace the suspended Lisan Al-Arab newspaper. It was administratively suspended twice, and its license was revoked on January 24, under the pretext that its owner did not hold a university degree, despite being one of Iraq's finest journalists. Al-Mufidah published an article in its newspaper discussing Layla magazine, accusing it of publishing content that contradicted Islamic teachings. The article claimed that the magazine encouraged women to abandon traditional values and engage in inappropriate behavior. Based on these allegations, the article called for the magazine to be suspended. This formulation presents an objective view of the published news without issuing preconceived judgments or adopting a particular point of view. For more details, see: Zahida Ibrahim, Index of Iraqi Newspapers and Magazines, Publications of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Iraq, 1976, p. 99.

(3) Al-Alam Al-Arabi newspaper was a prominent Arab magazine published in the first half of the twentieth century, and it played an important role in conveying political and cultural news and analyses to Arab readers across the Arab world. The newspaper was distinguished by its comprehensive coverage of Arab and international issues, and contributed to shaping Arab public opinion on many important events and issues of that period. The newspaper was a platform for Arab writers and thinkers to express their opinions and discuss pressing issues of concern to Arab societies, which made it an important source of information and analysis for readers interested in Arab affairs. For more details, see: George Kallas, the previous source, p. 254.

(4) Source: Laila Magazine, Issue (6), previous source, p. 346.

truth. It is enough for me that my conscience bears witness that I work with love and sincerity.<sup>1)</sup>Some of them intervened to stop the offensive campaign against Paulina Hassoun and her magazine. Al-Mufid newspaper was published under the title “Apology.” We were asked by someone we could not disobey to close the areas surrounding Laila magazine, so we did not want to work on that request.

The campaign led by the newspaper (Iraq) against Paulina Hassoun during that period of time, which was full of insults to the pioneering journalist, prompted her to file a lawsuit against the journalist Rizq Ghanem.<sup>2)</sup>In front of the courts, and the case was considered, and the newspaper (Al-Alam) stated, “Therefore, we ask the honorable writers whose articles have not been published until today for forgiveness and pardon.”<sup>3)</sup>

As part of its reform plan, the magazine criticized some social and economic customs that negatively affect women’s advancement, degrade their status, violate their rights, and keep them in a state of backwardness. Among what it wrote were the customs that accompany marriage and the reprehensible descriptions that women are called or referred to, and called for their adoption to preserve women’s dignity. Among what Paulina Hassoun related in this regard was a story told to her by a pharmacist, who said: “One day a man came to me and said: ‘Sir, two days ago you gave a cow, may God honor you, a bitter medicine that you could not afford to buy.’ I interrupted him, saying, ‘What cow?’ He said, ‘The mother of my children.’ I said to him, ‘Didn’t you find, you ignorant man, a more appropriate name for the mother of your children?’ I could not help but throw him out immediately.”<sup>4)</sup>It also criticized the custom of the males in the family eating first, followed by the women. The magazine continued to address a set of values and customs that treat women as inferior creatures less than men.<sup>5)</sup>

The court was convinced of the conviction of Razouk Effendi Ghannam for the crime of slander attributed to him and decided to convict him and sentence him to a fine of one hundred rupees and, in the event of failure to pay, to imprisonment for twenty days. The plaintiff acquired the right to a personal lawsuit by requesting ten thousand rupees in compensation from the convicted person. The court was convinced that the publications complained of led to her dismissal from her teaching position and deprivation of her salary and required her to bear the plaintiff’s expenses and fees. In view of the social status of both parties, the convicted Razouk Effendi Ghannam was ordered to pay one thousand rupees in compensation to the plaintiff. This decision was published in the first issue of the series. The issue of unveiling and the veil, which occupied society at that time, was in reality only a matter that dealt with formal phenomena. As for Laila’s treatments, they dealt with the moving joints of life in society and explored the relationships that affect its development.<sup>6)</sup>

After the end of the second year of the publication of Laila magazine, Paul Hassoun published in the newspaper (The Arab World) that the first issue of the third year, Laila magazine, will be published next month, drawing the attention of male and female readers.<sup>7)</sup>It seems that the pressure, the severe siege and the campaigns that Paulina Hassoun faced, whether from the fanatics, the press or the administration, had pushed her to abandon the publication of the first issue of the third year and to continue her journalistic work. The result was that this distinguished pioneering magazine was destroyed and stopped being published. Paulina Hassoun was not satisfied with that, but she packed her bags and left Iraq, returning to Palestine, leaving behind the memory of a valiant Iraqi woman, about whom it is right to say, in addition to being the first Iraqi journalist, that she is a pioneer of the Iraqi feminist movement.

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(1) Khaled Habib Al-Rawi, How the First Feminist Magazine Was Suppressed in the Twenties, Arab Horizons Magazine, Issue (2), February, p. 6.

(2) Razouk Ghannam (1882-1965) was born in Baghdad to a Christian family and received his primary and secondary education at St. Joseph School. He then completed his university studies in Adana, where he obtained a BA in Literature and Science. Upon his return to Iraq in 1908, he helped establish the Youth Union Association with a group of Christian youth. In 1912, he was enthusiastic about the principles of freedom and equality that spread among Arab youth who supported Arab nationalism. He dreamed of establishing an entity for the Arab nation within the Ottoman Empire to confront the policy of Turkification. During the British occupation of Iraq, Razouk Ghannam demanded that the British authorities grant the Iraqis the right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of US President Wilson, which he announced during World War I, and which included the right of peoples to self-determination. For more details, see: Iman Adel Muhammad Salih, Razouk Ghannam and his intellectual and political formation 1908-1918, College of Education for the Humanities, Tikrit University, Journal of Historical and Civilizational Studies, November 2023, pp. 33-37.

(1) Shukria Cooks, the previous source, p. 86.

(2) The same source, p. 88.

(5) Laila Magazine, Issue (17), July 30, 1924, p. 10.

(6) Laila Magazine, Issue (17), previous source, p. 12.

(7) The same source, p. 13.

### **Conclusion**

Iraqi feminist journalism represents a fundamental pillar in the history of the cultural and social renaissance of Iraqi women. Among these media platforms, Laila magazine emerged as a beacon of feminist awareness, providing Iraqi women with a space to express themselves and their aspirations. The magazine played a pivotal role in raising awareness among Iraqi women about their rights and encouraging them to enter fields previously dominated by men, such as higher education, music, and the arts..

Through its diverse articles and topics, Laila magazine challenged traditional social norms that restricted women's freedom, encouraging them to break the shackles of outdated customs and traditions that were out of step with modern demands. In doing so, it contributed to shaping a new generation of educated Iraqi women, aware of their role in building and developing society..

In conclusion, Iraqi feminist journalism, particularly Layla magazine, remains a testament to Iraqi women's struggle for freedom and equality, and to the important role the media has played in strengthening the status of women in Iraqi society.

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