

Preface

This book aims to shed light on Nawal El Saadawi's contributions to the feminist movement in Egypt and the Middle East. It delves into her early experiences and the social as well as political conditions that shaped her views, exploring how her activism and writings challenged the dominant discourse around women's rights in the Muslim world.

I still vividly remember the first time I saw Nawal El Saadawi on a TV screen speaking passionately about the issue of women's rights in Egypt. I was very little at that time and I was totally surprised that the mere mention of her name was enough to ignite heated discussions among those around me who were arguing passionately about her views on Islam and women's rights. While some fervently disagreed with her beliefs and considered her as a destroyer of traditional values, others viewed her as a bold defender of women's rights and gave her their full support. As a young child, I did not fully understand the depth of the conversation, but I was intrigued by this woman who seemed to have such an impact on people.

Years later, as I grew older and became more interested in women's rights, I began to read both her literary and non-fiction works and I was also lucky enough to attend one of her book readings in Virginia in 2008. It was pleasant to hear her speak, and I had the opportunity to briefly speak with her after that. As I delved further into her writings, I increasingly felt the need for a comprehensive examination of her beliefs. In an attempt to better understand her arguments, I began collecting all her views related to Muslim women's rights and doing a thorough analysis of them using two different lenses. One of them is that of classical scholars whose views enable us to understand the historical context in which the target topics were made on the one hand and evaluate the strength and weaknesses of the arguments, contributing to a more robust analysis on the other hand. The other lens, moreover, is that of modern feminists who lived the same era of El Saadawi. Upon completing this monograph, I was planning to meet with El Saadawi and further discuss its contents with her. However, my plans were abandoned since El Saadawi passed away while I was still writing this monograph. As El Saadawi lived with heated arguments around her, she left with the same level of controversy surrounding her final destination.

The beginning of this book explores the life and work of Nawal El Saadawi, from her early childhood in a rural Egyptian village to her rise as a pioneering feminist and outspoken critic of patriarchy as well as oppression. Then her writings and contributions to feminist literature and her activism in advocating for women's rights are presented. After that five controversial issues are introduced accompa-

nied with El Saadawi's views regarding them and followed with an analysis of her arguments in light of two different lenses: classical and modern.

I hope this book aids readers in gaining a deeper understanding of El Saadawi's perspectives and makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussions concerning the rights of Muslim women.