

NOUN SOLIDARITY

HEALING AND FEMINIST POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AS THE WAY FORWARD

Based on an interview with Samara Aridi, project coordinator at Noun Solidarity, a grassroots feminist organization founded in 2016 as the first independent grassroots feminist organization in the district of Aley. Noun constantly strives to break the alienating view of feminist spaces and works to organize effective, non-traditional, and non-conventional feminist politics through projects designed and implemented from a feminist perspective capable of achieving social acceptance and creating community motivation through the adoption of educational approaches and peer influence, popular education, awareness raising, and the creation of objective spaces and frameworks for analyzing the context from a political feminist perspective.

Samara says that “Noun Solidarity targets low-income women, girls, and youth, survivors of gender-based violence, individuals who have dropped out of education and, more recently, displaced persons.” By fostering resilience and self-sufficiency, Noun Solidarity aims to fight for rights through a feminist community organizing approach that restores agency to those affected by issues and connects them to opportunities for knowledge, production, and organization.

Despite living in Aley in Mount Lebanon, which was considered relatively safe, the area was subjected to several attacks which claimed the lives of more than 20 people. Samara and her fellow activists faced constant threats of Israeli attacks. Samara recalls: “I coordinated with colleagues and ensured their safety on frequently targeted roads. It was difficult to manage the anxiety and fear.”

Samara still remembers one particular Israeli strike on Kifoun– a neighboring town– which was particularly traumatizing. Shattered glass and shrapnel reached the Noun Solidarity Center. “I was completely overwhelmed and shaken for a moment,” she says. The intensity of this incident had a lasting impact on Samara’s well-being. “The war has brought enormous challenges, but it has also strengthened my commitment to feminist activism and the importance of resilience.”

“Our decision to participate in the emergency response comes from our understanding of the devastating impact that war has on women and marginalized populations,” Samara states. Noun Solidarity’s prioritization of essential aid, including food, hygiene kits, shelter and psychosocial services, has made a significant difference. She elaborates, “We believe that emergency response is not only about meeting immediate needs; it is about preserving dignity and fostering resilience.” In total, the organization has served 12,000 displaced persons in homes in the Baabda and Aley districts, and has supported nine shelters in the two districts, underscoring the importance and impact of their work.

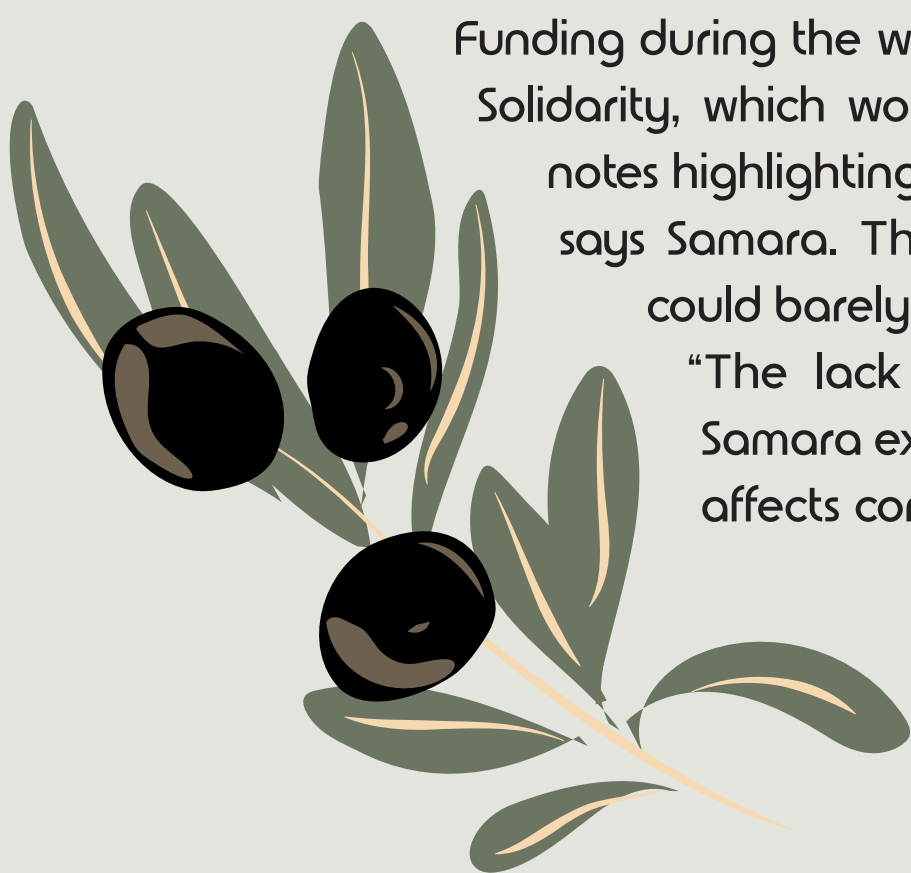


The war has shattered the economy at both the national and local levels. Samara says: “There is a dire need for grants and funding opportunities to support the economic recovery of community members and livelihood programs.” Furthermore, the psychological trauma and social disintegration caused by the war are scars that require long-term care and support. Training for counselors, safe spaces for community gatherings, and funding for psychosocial support programs are needed to address these ongoing challenges.

Samara emphasizes that “Solidarity is standing together in times of hardship and recognizing that collective strength and feminist solidarity are greater than individual divisions. This is achieved through mutual support, trust, and cooperation. Solidarity means working together, sharing burdens, and celebrating every success as a collective achievement. In our community, it involves strengthening bonds to counter feelings of isolation.” Samara advocates empowering women and marginalized people to lead organizational work and decision-making. It is essential to create intersectional solidarity networks to prioritize long-term systemic change and organize creatively and flexibly amid violence and volatility. “The key is to maintain a sense of unity and shared purpose in the face of uncertainty.”

In the post-war phase, Noun Solidarity plans to adjust its programs based on lessons learned during the war. This includes implementing feminist political mobilization and psychosocial support programs. The group wants to focus on resistance and healing as feminist work. Samara says: “In contexts under colonial violence, building solidarity also means addressing the trauma and emotional burdens of aggression, and feminist work must create spaces for healing while also organizing for justice and equality, ensuring that both emotional and political needs are met.”

Commenting on the NGO model as a vehicle for change, Samara sees both strengths and limitations. On the one hand, NGOs play a vital role in responding to crises by providing immediate relief, advocacy, and quick outreach to communities in need. On the other hand, the same model can be inefficient or overly reliant on external funding, hindering long-term sustainability and local ownership.



Funding during the war was limited, especially for women-led organizations such as Noun Solidarity, which works in rural areas with less visibility. “We submitted several concept notes highlighting our need for resources, but securing funding remained challenging,” says Samara. The group eventually received a small grant of just 25,000\$, which could barely address the extensive needs and rising costs associated with the crisis. “The lack of funding affects the organization’s ability to deliver services,” Samara explains. “It also limits the organization’s ability to recruit more staff and affects compensation.”