April 1, 2021

Dear friends of KW,

The time has come for me to make this announcement: that Knowledge Workshop co-founder and co-director, Sara Abou Ghazal, has left KW. The decision came in 2020, though we are currently in the process of finalizing the needed procedures, paperwork etc.

What this means and entails for KW is still unfolding, and I have been giving myself (and KW) time to understand that. For KW and the WHRD-Coalition to separate and for Sara to no longer be co-director of KW. What it means to have dreamed and started something together that has come to an end. What it means to continue to build on the work of the person who has designed and co-built KW’s foundations; when the co-founder whose experiences and labor has lifted KW since its inception has left. It has certainly also meant reassessing KW’s work in this time and place, but that is also because the world has changed drastically. And it has meant the loss of amazing Coalition co-workers and friends. Just as KW could not have been without Sawt al Niswa, we are proud and touched by knowing that KW also could not be without the Coalition. I love the idea of acknowledging where we come from and whose work we build on. It’s a responsibility and a gift.

What we are becoming will be more evident in the next months. For example, the Feminist School will no longer be part of KW. It was a project that Sara integrated into KW following the Feminism 101 classes that she developed and offered in Sawt al Niswa in 2013. Instead, since I personally come from the realms of words and concepts, of stories that wake something in us, of writing and nourishing feminist writings, KW will move closer towards publishing and making available more feminist resources.

I can also say that towards the end of 2020, I asked Azadeh Faramarziha to stand with me as a partner in KW. By first joining Sawt in 2013, and then becoming a central part of KW’s oral history project as its audio archivist from its beginnings, Azadeh’s work and support have been instrumental. And her clear-headedness has long been invaluable to our work. But more so, Azadeh represents a grounded continuity and understanding of where KW comes from. While Azadeh will not take the role of co-director, I look forward to her gradually taking on a bigger role.

It may be weird to thank someone for all the work they have done (not weird, but perhaps “small” compared to the work, is the more accurate word). But I carry deep gratitude for Sara making and co-making KW what it is, and for everything she made possible in and through KW, that sustains us still, as we sustain it. I and the KW team wish Sara all that is good and great, for her and for the Coalition.
Finally, I cannot but express how grateful I am to be part of an outstanding team at KW, and to be supported by people who believe in our work. It may be even weirder to end by saying that I find myself feeling excited about the direction our projects are taking. Given what each and all of us are going through, given that the situation in Lebanon is promising to only get worse, feeling excited about anything feels so out of place. But here we are. We are not continuing with business as usual, but we are continuing. There is still important work to be done here, by all of us who still can.

Faithfully,

Deema Kaedbey,

Director, Knowledge Workshop