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Feminism and Social Movements

The march for gender equality of Algerian women: The struggle for spatial and historical recognition

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Abstract

Social and political anti-government movements have been major headlines across the globe in recent years, with a noticeable participation of women. In the MENA region, such movements spanned Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Lebanon among others. Through an ethnographic inquiry into the Algerian pro-democracy movement Hirak (2019–2021), we delve into women's experiences of the Hirak to show how women remain marginalized politically, economically, and socially despite their heavy and praised participation. Using a recognition theory lens, we unveil dialectics of unity and division in the struggle for recognition among women in Algeria, a post-colonial context charged with conflicting ideological stances. We detect two structural dimensions of the struggle, a spatial/physical dimension and a historical/temporal dimension that help surface different gender positionalities and their dynamics as they vie for recognition. We stress the importance of not homogenizing women's political struggles, especially in the Global South.

KEYWORDS
gender justice, Hirak, recognition struggles, social movements

1 | INTRODUCTION

There is a growing awareness of the centrality of gender to social movements (see i.e., Biagini, 2020; Kouki & Chatzidakis, 2021; Moghadam, 2020), regardless of whether a particular social movement is about gender (see e.g.,

Bhattacharjya et al., 2013; Biagini, 2020; Daskalaki & Fotaki, 2017; Smolović Jones et al., 2021). This is particularly true of the recent social movements spanning the Arab world in recent years, which have been permeated by struggles related to women's rights, gender politics (legislation, constitutional articles, and transitional justice), and gender-based violence (see El Jurdi & Ourahmoune, 2021). The gender dynamics of the so-called "Arab Spring" have received attention from researchers, such as Valentine Moghadam, Erika Biagini, and Nadje Al Ali (see Al-Ali, 2012; Biagini, 2017, 2020; Moghadam, 2001, 2010, 2014), and findings from their work highlight the complexity of gender dynamics and gender relations in the Arab world. For example, Biagini (2020) showed that the participation of women members of the Muslim Sisterhood in the Egyptian Revolution resulted in a new gender politics with explicit feminist overtones among the Muslim Sisterhood. This new gender politics was evident in ways by which women challenged male privilege within the family sphere. Moghadam (2020) argues that gender relations and dynamics in the Arab world are influenced by socio-historic specificities that shape a specific context. Hence, the examination of women's experiences, resistance strategies, and organizing in social movements cannot be understood without reference to the socio-historic specificities, or what Askegaard and Linnet (2011) call "the context of context."

We situate our investigation within the recent anti-government protests calling for democracy that took place in Algeria between 2019 and 2021, aka Hirak, to overthrow President Bouteflika[1] who had announced that he was planning to run for a fifth mandate. He resigned weeks after the Hirak erupted, but the protestors continued to demand the departure of the military regime that had been in place since Algeria's independence in 1962. Protestors accused the military regime of corruption, hiding behind a civil façade, and hijacking the ideals of the war for decolonization.

The Algerian Hirak has been praised by local and global media for the high number of women who occupied the streets (see Lassel, 2020) and presents a rich case for gender analysis since it lies at the intersection of multiple ideological tensions that inform the gender order.[2] Algeria is a post-colonial nation that was subject to 130 years of French colonization. Algeria gained independence in 1962, after an 8-year war for decolonization, known as the "War of One Million Martyrs," where more than 11,000 Algerian women participated in the fight for the liberation of their country. In the 60 and 70s, Algerian women secured citizenship, equal rights to free education and healthcare, and entry into the workforce. Despite their participation in the Algerian War of Independence, women were excluded from positions of power post-independence by the ruling National Liberation Front (see Bennoune, 1995; Cheref, 2006; Moghadam, 2010; Salhi, 2010). In 1984, the Family Code was introduced and adopted by the legislature. The Code made all women minors in education, work, marriage, divorce, and inheritance and it allowed polygamy for men, which was a huge setback for Algerian women. Women gathered 1 million signatures to protest the Family Code and its statutes and were successful in eliminating some of the provisions in its original draft; however, they were not able to repeal it. In the 90s, Algeria underwent a 10-year civil war (the Black Decade) between the government and radical terrorist insurgent groups. Around 100,000 people lost their lives in terrorist attacks carried out by militant groups vying for state power. Women's bodies became central discourse to the insurgents, massive veiling was imposed, massacres and assassinations were committed, and women were abducted and used as servants and sex slaves by Jihadist groups (Turshen, 2002). Women were used as targets and pawns in the power struggle between militants and the government (Turshen, 2002). On February 22, 2019, protests erupted in Algeria and millions took to the streets to overthrow the Bouteflika reign. Protestors were harassed and jailed for expressing opinions, even in digital spaces. Crackdowns on protestors included men, women, journalists, activists, and academics who criticized the regime. Many feminist organizations joined the Hirak, and feminist activists gathered under a nonpartisan umbrella establishing a physical space for their presence in "Feminist Square" close to the University of Algiers. They called for an Algerian republic that guarantees equal rights to all citizens under a constitutional state. Despite the high presence of women among protestors, feminist slogans remained a minority and the participation of women did not mean that demands for gender equality were raised by protestors.

It is in this last period that we analyze women's experiences of the Hirak and the challenges to advancing gender equality using a recognition lens (Fraser, 2000; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Taylor, 2021) considering the socio-ideological history of Algeria. Recognition constitutes a central issue in social movements because recognition

is a crucial process of and outcome of social justice (Honneth, 2004). A recognition lens locates gender injustices in a specific context's sociocultural, discursive, and symbolic dynamics (Fraser, 2000). Our aim is to understand how women experience struggle for gender justice in contexts with conflicting/multiple ideologies shaping citizenship framing, or what Hobson (2003) calls "the cultural codes of gender." We find that women's struggles for recognition in contexts shaped by multiple ideological stances take spatial and historical dimensions that help surface different gender positionalities and their dynamics as they vie for recognition. We also find that in ideologically tense contexts, gender cultural frames conflict between opposing groups of women, leading to different and conflicting perceptions of and demands for justice. We show that gender shapes the political struggle of women participants in Hirak, where schisms between different groups of women protestors lead to different gender frames and strategies, which hinder the advancement of a gender agenda and erase it from movement goals. We highlight the importance of not homogenizing women's political struggles in the Global South, especially in ideologically conflicted contexts.

1.1 | Social movements, collective action, and gender

Social movements have taken center stage in recent years with movements such as Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, the Women's March, etc. gaining global traction. Social movements refer to collective action that aims to initiate social change and empower oppressed and marginalized social categories by challenging existing power relations and social and political conflict (Gurrieri et al., 2018). Social movements inspire collective action toward social justice by linking individuals and networks, leading to social and political change (Nardini et al., 2021). Social movements can result in transformative and lasting changes at the political, institutional, and social levels in society, with a deeper impact than policy changes alone, and have the power to transform gender relations and advance gender justice (see e.g., Biagini, 2020; Einwohner et al., 2000). Historically, not all social movements have been equally successful; nonetheless, social movements have shown their potential in initiating and transforming social, political, and institutional change (West, 2013).

Gender is "central to the emergence, nature, and outcomes of social movements" (Taylor, 1999, p. 166), and gender can affect social movement structures and social movements can affect gender, even when a movement is not focused on gender (see Biagini, 2020; Einwohner et al., 2000; Gheytanchi & Moghadam, 2014; Kouki & Chatzidakis, 2021). Gender plays a central role in shaping social movement dynamics (Zemlinskaya, 2010); for patterns of mobilization, framing strategies, movement hierarchies, and movement tactics are all gendered (for reviews, see Beckwith, 2000, 2001; Einwohner et al., 2000; Ferree & Mueller, 2004; Molyneux, 1998; Taylor, 1999; Taylor et al., 2001; Watylen, 2007). Scholars examining gender and social movement show how gender identities, gendered interactions, and structures of gender inequality affect mobilization, movement framing and dynamics, as well as movement strategies (see e.g., Einwohner et al., 2000; Ferree & Merrill, 2003; Taylor, 1999; Taylor et al., 2001).

An understanding of gender and social movements necessitates an examination of (1) tactics and strategies; (2) organizations; (3) opportunities and constraints; (4) and collective identity (Hurwitz & Crossley, 2018). Opportunities for social and political change in social movements are gendered in that they may facilitate or hinder women's participation as well as the achievement of a feminist agenda (Beckwith, 2000). Political and social opportunities can be gendered in three main ways: (1) they may advance or hinder the mobilization of men and women based on political and cultural contexts, (2) they may favor or disfavor issues related to gender, and (3) they may facilitate or hinder the advancement of non-gender-related issues when a particular movement is related to gender (Zemlinskaya, 2010).

Women's rights issues, gender equality, and gender justice are rarely among the list of priorities in sociopolitical movements, even when women are heavily involved and invested in such movements (Bhattacharjya et al., 2013; Biagini, 2020; Daskalaki & Fotaki, 2017), which is also the case in the Algerian Hirak. We propose that using a recognition lens (see Fraser, 2000; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Honneth, 2004; Taylor, 2021) to examine the gender dynamics of the Hirak can help reveal how conflicting stances around gender inequality can hinder solidarity and reproduce

gender hierarchies since such conflicts can affect the development of collective identities and the advancement of common goals and tactics.

1.2 | Gender and social movements through a recognition lens

Recognition refers to the reciprocal relationship between social actors such that each views the other as an equal counterpart (Fraser, 2000). Honneth (2004) considers recognition to be the foundation of social justice and identifies three social spheres from which recognition emanates—the family, civil society/law, and the state/economy. Demand for recognition, therefore, is central to political and social movements (Taylor, 2021).

Fraser (2000) highlights a particular kind of injustice that should be the basis of struggles for recognition: the institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute certain social categories as less worthy than others of social respect and prevent them from participating as equals in social life. From a recognition lens, gender is a status differentiator where the construction of norms, privileges, and traits favor associations with the masculine and devalue associations with the feminine (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). When such androcentric norms are institutionalized, women suffer gender status injustices such as marginalization and exclusion in social and political life.

1.2.1 | Recognition, misrecognition, and struggle

Many social movements aim for equal recognition of cultural identities or what Honneth (2004) calls "struggles for recognition." Struggles for recognition aim "to deinstitutionalize patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and to replace them with patterns that foster it" (Fraser, 2001, p. 28). Recognition struggles involve contests among and between movement groups over identities, the meanings attached to emancipation and empowerment, as well as discursive battles over authentic representation (Hobson, 2003). The cultural coding of gender, or what Hobson et al. (2014) call "citizenship frames," set the conditions for collectivities to make claims for recognition and transform practices of marginalization and exclusion and enhance the rights to participation. Social movements have challenged the false universalism in the framing of citizenship that has shaded out particularized experiences and identities in the practice of citizenship, including gender (Hobson et al., 2014). The state and institutions assume dynamic and complex roles in the interplay between recognition and redistribution and to understand this interplay, recognition politics should be located in historical contexts, political structures, institutions, and policies (Fraser, 2001; Hobson, 2003).

Using a recognition lens to examine social movements can reveal how women's tactics target gender inequality and injustice, the state, as well as women's marginalization within the street as well as in society. Such a lens can be useful to our context where Algerian women face misrecognition due to the Family Code and cultural and social practices in Algerian society. Cheriet (2014) argues that the post-revolution, post-independence Algerian regime subscribes to a modern universalist notion of citizenship, while at the same time reserving as its foundation the patriarchal, "original" and authenticating cultural values of Islamist culture, producing a gender paradox. Cheriet shows that the underlying patriarchy of the nationalist regime, despite its adherence to the concept of universal citizenship, merges with Islamist notions of disenfranchisement of women. Well-informed of the socio-history of Algeria and women's roles in it, we set on such an endeavor to explore how these multiple ideological stances shape the struggle for recognition of women participating in Hirak.

2 | METHODS

2.1 | Data generation

Ethnographic data were generated through first-hand engagement, where the first author gained insight into the Hirak through physical participation and daily online engagement. Digital activism intensified during the pandemic and travel was banned but the first author continued to interact with the participants online until June 2021, when the protests ended. Onsite ethnographic work took place between February 2019 and February 2020. Ethnography as a methodological approach allows for researcher reflexivity and immersion in the phenomenon in question, providing a rich understanding in a natural setting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Wolcott, 2007). This allowed for a rich account of the complex dynamics of recognition struggles among women of the Hirak.

The first author is an Algerian woman who is proficient in the three main languages used in Algerian society as well as the colloquial aspects of the Algerian culture, which created immediate bonding with the participants and facilitated a sense of safety and willingness to engage in natural conversations. The author made sure to pay attention to marginalized voices, acknowledging her own situated privileges. While the first author is familiar with the sociopolitical context, she sought to challenge this familiarity. The author stressed that her role was to uncover and highlight the various voices of women participating in the Hirak. To mirror the heterogeneity of the movement, the first author marched with diverse cohorts of women, since different spaces of the marches reflected social class divides and values, etc. The first author recognized the rifts between the women of Feminist Square and other women at the Hirak and sought to be inclusive of various views and experiences of women at the Hirak.

2.2 | Primary data

The ethnographic fieldwork consisted of participant observation and field notes over a period of 12 months supplemented with 32 interviews. Our data included interview transcripts, field notes, photos, and videos recorded during the events, representing a communicative repertoire as well as the symbolic space and structure of that repertoire. Participation was voluntary and participants were approached during the marches and later interviewed at a time of their choice via the Messenger app (voice call). Our approach to ethnography was multimodal (see Dicks et al., 2006) in that it utilized multiple modes of communication such as text, interviews, images, and participant observation. This multimodal approach enabled a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the human experience of the Hirak and allowed us to capture the richness and complexity of women's experiences of the Hirak than is possible with traditional ethnographic methods, which rely primarily on text.

The sample size was not predetermined, and data collection concluded when additional interviews no longer provided significant insights (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Suddaby, 2006). New interviews were analyzed in comparison to previously conducted interviews to identify similarities and differences (Miles et al., 2019). The interviews were conducted as conversations to allow for a natural flow, and the informants were eager to share their experiences at the Hirak. Verbatim transcriptions of the interviews were completed within 48 h, and pseudonyms were assigned to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees. The sample included 10 women marching in the "Feminist Square" as well as 22 women from outside the square who marched at least two Fridays per month. Table 1 provides a list and summary of our informants and their backgrounds. The social media account of the participants confirmed their involvement as they all uploaded pictures of themselves marching in the Hirak. Snowballing allowed for "qualitative diversity" (ages, education and professional backgrounds, marital status, regions of origin, and position per women's role within the social movement). The questions tackled background information, experiences of marginalization in social and political life, motivations to join the marches, criticisms, appreciations, and expectations of Hirak, as well as perceptions of the suitability of including gender justice in the goals of the protests for democracy. The participants were also asked about their views regarding the status of women in Algeria and the obstacles and challenges they

TABLE 1 Summary of informants.

Pseudonym	Age, profession, and marital status
Informants who identified as feminist	
Aicha	65, university professor, married with 2 kids
Leila	28, pharmacist, single
Nesrine	30, manager, married, 3 kids
Ines	24, student, single
Khedidja	71, retired medical doctor
Anya	42, engineer in an international company, single
Fatiha	49, engineer, stay at home, married, 2 kids
Feriel	44 medical doctor, married, 2 kids
Lamia	23, student, single
Amina	52, business owner, divorced, 3 kids
Hadya	68, retired university professor, 3 kids
Informants who did not identify as feminist	
Linda	42, engineer, stay at home, 2 kids
Imane	27, doctoral student, single
Shanez	31, medical doctor, single
Fadila	57, engineer stay at home, married, 2 kids
Naima	44, engineer, stay at home, 3 kids
Ibtissam	37, former medical doctor now business owner, married, 2 kids
Sabiha	59, retired civil servant, married, 3 kids
Farida	55, nurse, married, 3 kids
Wahiba	49, teacher, married, 3 kids
Melissa	21, student, single
Karima	34, secretary; married, 2 kids
Nawel	39, works in a bank, married, 2 kids
Kheira	62, stay at home, married, 4 kids
Salima	47, teacher, married 3 kids
Sihem	37, former manager, stay at home, 3 kids
Manel	23, student, single
Farisa	57, family business owner, widow, 2 kids
Fahema	63, stay at home, married, 4 kids
Nadia	46, nurse, married, 2 kids
Sabah	33, unemployed, married, 2 kids
Tinhinane	29, engineer, single
Hanane	24, engineer, unemployed, single

face in social and political life. Most interviews were recorded and lasted between 1 and 2 h and were later validated by the informants after transcription. When the participants opted for the author not to record, notes were taken during the interview. Most of the participants were also followed on their social media, with their permission, and met with on various occasions in the marches and at public events related to the Hirak, which enriched the insights of their experiences of the Hirak.

Participants often referred to material artifacts such as placards and slogans, which helped the researcher grasp the different meanings and representations that emerged in the conversation. The authors firmly anonymized the data placing the informants' consent and protection as a priority. Data collection and analysis involved an iterative process of participation in the marches, observation, reflexive writing, interpretation of emerging ideas, rewriting, and enriching the interview guide from one interview to another. On Friday marches, the first author would grab a coffee with an interviewed participant to share some emerging results or ideas to refine the next interview. A participative and flexible approach was necessary to engage in a co-construction of knowledge. Knowledge co-construction in the context of ethnographic inquiries refers to the collaborative and interactive process through which researchers and research participants work together through dialogue and communication to create, interpret, and shape knowledge about the context under study. Therefore, knowledge production in ethnography is not a one-sided endeavor where researchers impose their perspective on the studied population but rather a joint effort where both parties contribute to the construction of understanding (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The possibility to circle emerging themes, go back to previous participants to discuss the results, and include insights in subsequent interviews ensured an efficient dialogical and participatory approach to knowledge co-construction.

The second author's lack of immersion in the field provided analytical distance. As a non-Algerian Arab witnessing a comparable social movement of a shorter period, the second author challenged assumptions and interpretations and challenged ethnocentric views while ensuring that the plurality of voices was represented and reflected in the analysis.

2.3 | Data analysis

We used thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2006) to locate, examine, and report themes, while searching for contrasts and similarities, recurring themes, and emerging patterns. Thematic analysis aims to identify and interpret the dominant themes or underlying meanings that emerge from the communication patterns within the data. In thematic analysis, the concept of discourse (as underlying systems or patterns of meaning) is often used to explore how participants in a study talk about and make sense of a particular topic or issue (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2023). This understanding contributes to a deeper exploration and interpretation of the research material, allowing for a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. We employed an iterative analytical approach throughout, where data collection influenced interpretations and theoretical development, which in turn influenced further data collection and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To identify patterns within and between interviews, analysis was conducted using an iterative process of coding, categorization, and abstraction (Miles et al., 2019) until universal themes emerged and themes became saturated (Suddaby, 2006). In this multi-stage iterative process, "ideas were used to make sense of data, and data was used to change ideas" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 158). Based on our recognition analytical lens, initial coding identified common themes relating to experiences of empowerment, mobilization, gender justice, gender equality, cultural identity, marginalization/exclusion, respect, and worth. Using a recognition analytical lens, we sought to understand how Algerian women's experience of marginalization and injustice contributes to their mobilization practices and modes of struggle in the pursuit of recognition. To elicit higher-order abstractions, we coded the themes pertaining to each participant's perceptions and experiences of gender justice and struggles for recognition before comparing the themes across all participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This helped refine the results to emphasize how the struggle for recognition of Algerian women emerges from their everyday experiences and the experiences of Hirak. The final phase of analysis involved theoretical coding, in which we compared emerging themes to the body of existing literature on recognition and struggle. Through this process, we were able to identify themes of spatial and historical struggles for recognition, which are woven into the complex ideological and socio-historical context of Algeria.

3 | HIRAK AND THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

Two main dimensions of struggles for recognition emerge from our data: the struggle for spatial recognition and the struggle for historical recognition, each denoting differences in the construction of gender cultural codes within Algerian society and representing contentious issues between the women of Feminist Square and other women participants in the Hirak. The emerging themes, which we outline below, draw on different sources of data that are weaved together for a clarified reading of the text.

3.1 | The struggle for spatial recognition (crossing into and occupying public spaces)

The struggle for spatial recognition emerged as a central theme in our data. The high visibility and presence of women on the streets, traditionally a masculine enclave, was celebrated as a huge win for women in claiming the street as a site of transformation of gender relations in Algerian society. The street as a site of protest was not an accessible space for Algerians for years under an authoritarian regime.

> For 60 years, this 'power' has acted like Algerians do not exist, they served their own interests. The Hirak is a movement for our dignity, to tell them we are here, you cannot act like we are ghosts, we want to build our country…
>
> (Khedidja, 71, retired physician)

For women, occupying the streets meant transgressing the space between the private and the public, as a cultural space traditionally restricted for women (Hasso & Salime, 2016; Kharroub, 2021) and the Hirak facilitated this crossing. The presence of women in the street was seen as a sign of empowerment and a challenge to the gendered construction of the street as a masculine space (Oussedik, 2019; Stephan and Charrad, 2020):

> It was not easy; I mean we did not know if as a woman I might be putting myself at risk because I might get harassed by men. But I had no issues, the Hirak is friendly, really seeing all these women and families walking, chanting 'silmya' (peace) is one of the most memorable moments of my life.
>
> (Hanane, 24, unemployed engineer)

This distinction between the private and the public, where men dominate the public sphere, whereas women are relegated to the private sphere, is central to feminist writing and political struggle and is an anthropological feature of Algerian culture (Oussedik, 2020). For example, it is uncommon to see Algerian women in the evenings at restaurants or other outdoor public spaces unless accompanied by family, and street harassment is a common complaint among women:

> You can't walk the streets without hearing inappropriate comments, sometimes you want to hide. It is one of the reasons why women rarely walk the streets and always use their cars instead…it is sad, but 'outside' spaces are unfriendly, I am young and tired of commuting from university to home because men are uneducated!
>
> (Manel, 23, student)

The walls of the domestic space weigh on Algerian women's ability to be considered equal citizens and equal representatives at the marches beyond archetypical figures of sacrifice and beauty. Through the Hirak, women tried to regain legitimacy in the public space, blurring the frontiers through mobilization and collective action (shouting, dancing, singing, etc., just like their male counterparts). Women activists demanded respect and recognition. An

interesting anecdote recalled by several informants is that of a young woman who was harassed while jogging during Ramadan by a man who shouted at her "*your place is in the kitchen*." She complained to a police officer but was ignored. The following weekend, she was seen running with over a hundred women and men in response. Following this incident, the slogan "*My place is not in the kitchen, I belong in the Hirak*" was noticeable at all Friday marches. Such bodily discourses calling for freedom from the domestic space can be illustrated in the following placard (see Figure A1) in French and Berber that says: "*Let the beautiful leave the kitchen*." The mixing of the traditional with the modern stresses the need for women to move beyond the patriarchal Mediterranean constraints without negating the ancestral Berber culture.

Yet not all women had equal access to the street, women were granted easy access so long as they abided by the "collective identity" of the Hirak. Hobson (2003) argues that recognition struggles involve contests both among and between movement groups over identities, the meanings attached to emancipation and empowerment as well as discursive battles over authentic representation. Indeed, there was no consensus among our participants, feminists as well as nonfeminists (per their own description of themselves), that gender equality is a lever of political transformation through the pro-democracy movement. Most of the women interviewed perceived feminist demands to be divisive of the Hirak, and that demands should be aligned with the demands of the Hirak and Algerian society, and not confined to one social group. Some women internalized a position of an active agent of a system that remains patriarchal (Mahmood, 2001).

> Algerian men are very protective, they protect us, I am here to support my brothers in making a positive change in the country, not to create a war of sexes.
>
> (Karima, 34, secretary)

Any such demands can wait for a later time (mich wekteha—now is not the time) after the demands of the Hirak are achieved. This echoes Cynthia Enloe's (2014) finding of "not now, later" as a common practice of deprioritizing women's issues in revolutionary movements, a feminist issue that persists to this day and across contexts (Daskalaki & Fotaki, 2017). Yet, in our context, this deprioritizing of gender equality translated into feminists' voice and presence being literally circumscribed into a small perimeter, as evidenced in their confinement to a semi-private space within this public space—Feminist Square. The Hirak reproduced social hierarchies and gender relations in the street through the Feminist Square.

Given the central role of women in defining and constructing national identity in Algerian society per the Family Code, feminist demands were seen as divisive and had to be silenced or confined. This physical separation from other women, in addition to harassment on social media signals a struggle for the inclusion of political actors in a decentralized movement with no official hierarchy of leaders.

> Algerian society is difficult for feminists, I mean you can be here but the majority of protestors will minimize your efforts, We are now a small group of women, and we are happy to welcome newcomers. But it's as if it's shameful to be associated with us, how crazy is that?! we are part of every social movement to defend the rights of all women and to live in a democratic society.
>
> (Aicha, 65, university professor)

Women who defied the cultural framing of gender were delegitimized, policed, silenced, or subjected to some form of verbal violence. In our context, conflicts and differences between different groups of women hindered agonism (see Smolović Jones et al., 2021), and conflicts in cultural gender frames produce antagonism manifest in exclusion and marginalization of feminist voices which hindered solidarity building. This showed that the public space remained a space of violence or restriction for women seeking recognition beyond national identity. In other words, the participation of women had to uphold the patriarchy, otherwise, transgressions had to be reprimanded by reminding women of their "place" either through patronizing acts or through threats of violence. Their place within the Hirak as a

public space had to be confined to that of the subservient or supportive. This is in line with feminist writing (see Bargetz, 2009; Lee, 2007) that when women join the public sphere, their demands must align with those of their male counterparts. Women's demands are deemed secondary as they are connected to the private realm, for the public realm is reserved for "real issues." This reveals the schism of perspectives within the Hirak where a façade of unity is fissured, and feelings of marginalization are expressed by some feminist participants:

> We are tolerated at the Hirak so long as we do not expose our project for an egalitarian society, we are viewed as the ones wanting the Hirak to fail. It is like we need to find ways to cope with the violence against us.
>
> (Anya, 42, engineer).

Women's participation in Hirak was relegated to a secondary role, just as her role in social life, that of supporting the Hirak, as evident in the frustration expressed by Nafissa in the quote below:

> We are on the streets, we have our voices as citizens it's such an immense win, we are visible, all the year we work, we take care of everyone, but it is like we should leave the streets to men, the real politics to men and at home give them the best piece of meat when we serve dinner!
>
> (Nafissa, 44, medical doctor)

The divide in perspectives among women and the struggle for spatial recognition reached its paroxysm on International Women's Day. Historically in Algeria, the government engages in state feminism, celebrating women and their progress. On that day, women get half a day off from work, such that gender is politically instrumentalized. Traditionally, feminist groups and NGOs lead Women's Day marches in Algeria. On March 8, 2021, feminist activists reported that they were forced to leave the front of the march by nonfeminist women who claimed that they were the "*real voice*" of the Hirak. Women leaders of the Hirak are only respected as equals when their demands are in line with androcentric views without any reference to feminist values or the Family Code. Women leaders in the Hirak embody this position, silencing any reference to feminism, feminist values, and calls for gender equality.

3.2 | The struggle for historical recognition

The struggle for historical recognition is seen through the mobilization of traditional outfits such as the Algerian hayek (see Figure A2) that young and older women wore at the Hirak to symbolize Algerian identity. The hayek was the central item of clothing during the decolonization war, where women hid their faces within its large white scarf. On Independence Day, pictures of women wearing the iconic outfit were heavily circulated on social media as a symbol of women's resistance.

At one point, during the Hirak, the authorities deemed the Berber flag illegal and jailed protestors carrying Berber flags. The following Friday, women demonstrated wearing traditional Berber outfits and jewels, in assertion of Berber history as part of Algerian identity while also carrying the Algerian flag as an act of resistance.

A major highlight of all interviews conducted was a reference to the moudjahidates, or women who fought for the liberation/decolonization of Algeria. Women like Djemila Bouhired, Hassiba Ben Bouali, and Djamila Boupacha among others, took up arms and fought for the liberation of Algeria, and were persecuted at the hands of the French occupation between 1954 and 1962. The participation of women in Hirak was seen as a continuation and commemoration of the history of Algerian women who fought for independence and were respected by men and women alike.

> The Algerian woman is highly respected for her courage and ability to preserve the nation. During the colonization war, women were the pillars. Many were widowed, yet they never remarried for the

sake of their kids. They were both mother and father. Regardless of the level of education, we all were raised with the pride of being descendants of strong women capable of anything to rescue the family. so it is normal that the Algerian woman is celebrated in the streets as part of this movement that will serve her kids as well.

(Farida, 55, nurse)

Women outside of Feminist Square take pride in the traditional idea of women as guardians of temples, upholders of traditions, and the family. This internalized role of heroic femininity is about sacrifice and is rooted in the history of decolonization. It was not about fighting for women and their rights as equal citizens but rather for the survival of the nation. Women outside of Feminist Square sought to delegitimate feminist demands by accusing feminist participants in the Hirak of importing Western ideologies that are foreign to "Algerian identity." On the other hand, feminist voices sought to legitimate their demands for gender equality using historical legitimacy by building on the iconic images of Algerian moudjahidates who were killed during the Black Decade.

We have a long history of fighting for democracy, our banners show our sister moudjahidates who took part in the armed fight for independence. After independence was gained, women were gradually demoted to second-class citizens by a shameful legal code. Our banners show our sisters who have lost their lives fighting radical Islamists who targeted women and forced them to veil or killed them. Yet we are seen as outsiders when demanding equal rights and justice for women through the Hirak.

(Hadya, 68, university professor).

Feminists held up pictures of iconic Algerian women who were killed during the Black Decade with the slogan "*women's rights, every time, everywhere*" as an answer to the "mish wektaha" (now is not the time) excuse and as proof of Algerian women's historical role and struggle.

Sometimes, I don't understand women in this country when they tell you I have all my rights. I think they don't know their history. I feel women had many more freedoms in the past …Education is now a huge problem after the Arabization and Islamization movements. you know, the fundamental school policy since the 1980s is a catastrophe when it comes to teaching history and the role of women. Sometimes, when I am with my college friends, we compare our youth to what is happening today and we feel isolated, it's like our people were replaced with new ones. They don't think the same, they don't dress the same, we don't see progress the same way…I mean the only thing we agree on is that this regime has stolen our independence!

(Aicha, 65, university professor)

Yet, Hirakist women outside of Feminist Square view this history differently; to them the sacrificial role of women to nation building is internalized:

Women of my country are brave, proud, and always participate in liberating the country, they are the ones who fed the moudjahidin (male fighters of the revolution against the French), and when needed they took arms, they are alongside men in the building of our nation. They have their roles; they are not against men. We abide by our traditions. All these feminists want to destabilize our culture and our religion, they refuse to hear the voices of wisdom in the name of our Hirak as a unitary movement.

(Naima, 44, unemployed engineer)

The historical ideological tensions create clashes between Hirakists and feminists of Feminist Square. There is consensus among feminist participants of Hirak, beyond any generational differences, to evoke spontaneously the historical significance of the Family Code as the crux of the fight for gender equality:

> I was born in 1984, the year the code was instituted to construct Algerian women as inferior, I am ashamed as a citizen to be subject to such horrible rules. I work and contribute to everything and then I am nothing according to the law, incapable of making my own decisions as a married woman?!
>
> (Amina, 52, business owner)

Another participant also stresses an idea of shame and frustration at the limitations imposed by the Family Code:

> It is a disgrace until we undo this Family Code. anyone can say they are proud of being Algerian, but I am not, it is a shame. When I go overseas, I feel we are lagging. we are a nation who showed the world that men and women can jointly overturn colonialism and injustices.
>
> (Anya, 42, engineer)

Calling out the Family Code is seen as "un-Algerian" and "un-Islamic" and trying to change the face of Algeria. For example, Wahiba states:

> It is against the teachings of our religion to ask for the demands of the feminists, our religion is just and fair and commands principles that we need to. I don't need to inherit equally to my brother, glory to God I am married, I have my home, I need nothing more. Yet I do condemn any violence against women even if I do not support the feminists. But let them (feminists) speak, no aggressiveness is needed, God is on our side!
>
> (Wahiba, 44, teacher)

Not all women in our study supported the demands for gender equality within Hirak. These women had views aligned with those of their male counterparts viewing gender equality as an issue that conflicts with their national identity and what it means to be an Algerian woman:

> I am an Algerian woman, I march for democracy, I support my brothers and sisters in the fight for justice, but I do not see a problem in our conditions as women in Algeria, I am happy with my rights as a woman. I want corruption to end and a state of justice, but I am not marching to change my country to become like the West. We are not Westerners. We have our roots. I am a Muslim Algerian woman first and foremost.
>
> (Naima, 44, unemployed engineer).

This quote highlights the complexities of women's presence on the streets: their role is not a signal of emancipation, but rather a tool to uphold the values stipulated in the Family Code.

4 | DISCUSSION

This research presented women's struggles for recognition in the Algerian Hirak, a postcolonial context with tense ideological stances that shape and sustain inequalities in gender relations. Two main dimensions of the struggle for recognition emerge, a spatial dimension and a historical dimension. When it comes to spatial recognition, women's crossing from the private space of the home to the public space of the street is celebrated as a sign of empowerment

for women; however, this crossing is conditional to demands that are consistent with the general demands of the Hirak. We find that due to different cultural coding of gender and citizenship frames among women, the Hirak challenges and reproduces gender hierarchies in the street. Feminist protestors calling for gender equality are seen as divisive of the Hirak and are "punished" by confinement to a semi-private space within the larger public space in their struggle for spatial recognition. Women of the Hirak also engage in struggles for historical recognition by drawing on the history of women revolutionaries who fought French colonialism as a sign of the protective and sacrificial role of women in Algerian society and as a right to ask for democracy. Feminist participants' historical struggle for recognition views this history as an attestation to the right of women to be treated as equals in Algerian society. These conflicts in struggles for recognition among different groups of women inhibit solidarity building among women participants of the Hirak and hinder efforts to advance a gender equality agenda. In the paragraphs that follow, we return to the struggles for recognition in the gender and social movements' literature to elaborate on our contributions and suggest future paths for the study of gender in social movements.

Our first point of discussion relates to feminist recognition struggles in social movements. We echo Hobson's (2003) argument that understanding struggles for recognition necessitates an understanding of gender cultural frames. We highlight how gender cultural frames need to be understood within the context of the socio-historic events that shape them. We elucidate the complexities of post-colonial contexts and how each context must be studied in its own right, making sure not to homogenize women's struggles. Each context has its own socio-historic specificities shaping gender ideologies and cultural frames. For example, Biagini (2020) showed that the participation of women in the Egyptian revolution resulted in a transformation in gender relations; however, the high participation of women in Algeria did not produce similar results. This highlights the importance of not treating Arab contexts as homogenous when it comes to cultural codes of gender and that citizenship frames are not universal across the Arab world. Therefore, any attempts to transform gender relations must be embedded in understandings of struggles for recognition, which must be located in socio-historic events shaping social and political institutions. We approach the struggle for recognition using a multi-modal ethnographic approach to unravel the multiplicity of women's voices present at the Hirak to locate their discourses and embodied actions in the macro-ideological context of Algeria. In so doing, we also follow feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe's (1990, 2014) approach to tackling gender issues "where women are" regarding patriarchy and politics, suggesting that this needs to be done "country by country" in an effort not to homogenize women from the Global South. Behind the unity and silmya (nonviolence) mottos of the Hirak, we show how recognition struggles are shaped by an institutional context where there is an interplay between recognition and redistribution (Fraser, 2000) in the framing of the "Algerian woman" as a collective identity. The study shows that the cultural coding of gender in Algerian society, as shaped by cultural practices and the Family Code, both opens and closes paths for recognition struggles. The interaction between feminist demands and gender frames hinders recognition struggles and shapes the discursive universe of the Hirak where dynamics of inclusion and exclusion unfold.

While the Hirak has been described by local and international media as one of the most nonviolent social movements, we show that a recognition lens enables us to note that this seeming nonviolence comes at the expense of women and their instrumentalization. The seeming empowerment of women through the street is merely visual/esthetic and any attempt to distort this visual is contained physically by the Hirakists. On the surface, the presence of mechanisms of distribution (as relics of the Soviet planned economy and a way of "buying peace") allows women to access employment, education, and health care and appear to be at par with Western countries. Yet, feminists feel misrecognized by the stipulations of the Family Code, whereas other women Hirakists internalize the gender cultural code (Mahmood, 2001) as an acceptable norm.

Contests over identities and the meaning of empowerment emerge in the Hirak, and space and history play a central role in the manifestation of struggles. There is a reclaiming of a traditionally masculine public space by women, which is read by all participants as a gain, yet tensions erupt when some women challenge the gender order and citizenship frames. Women's physical presence in the street does not equate to the transformation of the gender order nor to the inscription of the personal/private in the political but is supportive of androcentric power markers. This struggle for spatial recognition results in strategies of exclusion marked spatially.

Our second point concerns the value of multi-modal ethnographies (Dicks et al., 2006) in the investigation of struggles for recognition when it comes to social movements. Visuals, text, and discourses, used simultaneously, produce a holistic understanding of manifestations of struggle. The struggle for spatial recognition leverages complex semiotic signs to convey both modern emancipation and allegiance to patriarchal codes. Historical recognition emerges as constant semantic and visual signs that encode the complex and often conflicting meanings behind similar references found in the history of the country for women to express their Algerian identity. Different interpretations of the historical role of the moudjahidates and the meanings of empowerment result in intra-woman Hirak conflicts depending on different readings of history. The same slogans, banners, outfits, and images have different meanings and significations to different groups of women. Colonialism, decolonization, nationalism, and Islamism, among other discourses, affect women's representations and experiences of Hirak. Each ideology bears gender cultural codes that permeate the definitions of gender roles in contemporary Algeria, leading to distortions, entanglements, and intra-Hirak conflicts among women that impede solidarity. Tracing spatially the quest for recognition through the Hirak circles back to constant fights for meanings that are historically constructed. At the heart of deep conflicts between feminists and the other women Hirakists is the labeling of feminists as inauthentic, imperialist, or foreign feminists due to their secularism.

Schisms need to be clarified through dialogue and explanation regarding the different ideological positions to allow space for agreement in this context. Instead, rigid positions emerge, and a façade of unity is conveyed. Enloe (2014) relevantly refers to the Greek etymology of the word "radical" (also in terms of history) (radix, which means root) in her work on feminist activism within international politics to address social justice issues at their root causes and origins. Enloe explains invariably these disruptions and demonization of feminists in the name of more urgent problems that mask the roots of gender inequality. In other words, fundamental changes in societal norms, power structures, and policies are necessary rather than merely making surface-level reforms. The "not now, later" or "mich wakteha" as a major fissure between women in the Hirak illustrates a problem not restricted to the Global South. Like Enloe (2014), we do not envision resolutions but pose questions through this research to encourage dialogue among different camps of women in what seems to be a point of inertia.

Finally, we consider gender positionalities as powerful in shaping struggles for recognition. In ideologically tense contexts, gender cultural frames conflict between opposing groups of women, leading to different and conflicting perceptions of and demands for justice. Despite the physical encounters and moments of solidarity and sisterhood on the ground (expressed also through inter-classes, generations, and regions) and on the surface (signifiers of historic events), solidarity is impeded and antagonism, rather than agonism (Smolović Jones et al., 2021), and arises between different groups of women in the Hirak, when considering underlying historical layers and ideologies. This hinders the advancement of a gender agenda and erases it from movement goals. We highlight the importance of not homogenizing women's political struggles in the Global South, especially in ideologically conflicted contexts. We encourage further investigation of the gendered dimensions of social movements and argue that signifiers are better understood when traced back to the genealogy of signs specific to cultural codes of gender within a context.

5 | CONCLUSION

In our examination of the Hirak, a non-western context or "invisible half" (Jafari et al., 2012), we revealed the varied intersected ideological stances that shape the complexities of context (see Askegaard & Linnet, 2011) and women's experience of struggles for recognition in social movements. We invite further scholarship on social movements and gender in these "invisible" contexts. Our approach highlights complexities and nuances through an approach that avoids reductionism, essentialism, and the exoticization of Algerian women and feminists. We highlight how socio-historic realities shape the experiences of Algerian women and how broader conversations located in the North are not strange Algerian feminist realities. Our recognition lens enables a broader understanding of the experiences of women and feminists within social movements. We illustrate how recognition helps understand "how social

movements are formed to oppose and undermine feminist collectives and agendas" (Smolović Jones et al., 2021). We invite scholars to extend the application of this approach to unveil the systemic struggles women and feminists face when they actively contribute to a social movement that is not a women's movement.

We wish to address the issue of the Western gaze of the "Arab Spring" and invite dialogues between North and South for a deconstruction of the compassionate (paternalist?) Western gaze that envisions women in the Global South as de facto disempowered. Rather we encourage future research that asks, "How can we learn from the multiple social movements happening in Latin America, South Asia, and MENA where women have gained experience fighting patriarchy and still are made invisible?"

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No conflict of interest is to be reported.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not shared.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Bouteflika ruled from 1999 to 2019, and his rule was tarnished by allegations of corruption as well as vote tampering and fraud at each election. Britannica, the Editors of Encyclopedia. "Abdelaziz Bouteflika." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 26, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abdelaziz-Bouteflika. Accessed 2 August 2023.

[2] Matthews (2017) defines the gender order as a patterned system of ideological and material practices carried out by individuals in a society, through which power relations between women and men and codes of masculinity and femininity are created and recreated.

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APPENDIX

FIGURE A1 Berber feminist Hirakist. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

F I G U R E A 2 Woman in Algerian hayek. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]