

From Victim to Voice: A Study of Rania Al-Baz's "Disfigured"

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Abstract

This paper examines Rania Al-Baz's memoir, *Disfigured: A Saudi Woman's Story of Triumph Over Violence* (2007). Al-Baz, a pioneering Saudi television journalist, recounts her life before and after a brutal attack by her husband that left her physically disfigured. The analysis explores how the memoir transcends a simple narrative of victimhood. Al-Baz's unflinching portrayal of domestic violence is considered a cornerstone in the Saudi feminist movement, serving as a powerful testament to the courage and perseverance of women fighting for their rights. The memoir highlights Al-Baz's resilience in navigating the Saudi medical system, the challenges of public scrutiny, and the social stigma surrounding domestic violence. The paper argues that writing and publishing *Disfigured* functions as a form of activism, raising awareness about domestic abuse within a conservative social context. While not identifying as a feminist herself, Rania Al-Baz's story has become a rallying point for the Saudi feminist movement. Al-Baz spoke out on behalf of abused women and represented their plight exposing the harsh realities faced by women in Saudi society. This, in turn, empowered Saudi feminists to push for legal reforms and a more responsive judiciary. By examining Al-Baz's personal story, the paper sheds light on the complex realities of domestic violence and women's empowerment in contemporary Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Saudi Feminism, Saudi Feminist Movement, Memoir, Activism, Domestic Violence, Women's Empowerment

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Introduction

Saudi feminism is a multifaceted movement that defies conventional Western paradigms. Rooted in a society steeped in tradition and patriarchal norms, Saudi women navigate a delicate balance between practicing Islam as they see fit and advocating for their rights within their country. Rania Al-Baz, a courageous Saudi TV news anchor, exemplifies this struggle. Her memoir, *Disfigured: A Saudi Woman's Story of Triumph over Violence* (2007), chronicles her harrowing journey from being a celebrated news anchor to a victim of domestic abuse. After her abusive husband left her extremely injured, Al-Baz underwent thirteen reconstructive surgeries. By sharing horrifying images of her ravaged face, she sparked societal dialogue and embarked on research into domestic violence. She eventually decides to write her memoir in English to continue her feminist strife. Al-Baz's memoir resonates with Saudi feminism, emphasizing the need for systemic transformation while honoring cultural identity.

The Memoir and Saudi Feminist Activism

The memoir, *Disfigured*, holds immense relevance in shedding light on the complex interplay between women's advocacy and cultural traditions in the Middle East. As a celebrated news anchor in Saudi Arabia, Rania Al-Baz was a trailblazer—the first woman in her country to hold such a position (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 7; AbiRafeh and Keeffe, 2023, p. 15). However, her life took a harrowing turn when she became a victim of domestic abuse. The brutal attack left her disfigured, but her courage and resilience transformed her into a global advocate for women facing similar challenges (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 8; AbiRafeh and Keeffe, 2023, p. 17). Through her account, Al-Baz navigates the delicate balance between honoring her cultural and religious identity while advocating for women's rights. She emphasizes that the struggle is not against her country or religion, but against those who misuse these institutions to wield power (Butera, 2021, p. 9). Al-Baz's story resonates with countless women in the Middle East, illustrating their fight for justice, progress, and the reconciliation of tradition with personal freedom (Nejem, 2018, p. 27).

Saudi feminism is a complex movement working for gender equality despite social restrictions and government crackdowns. It is both an ideological movement promoting women's rights and a social movement working for gender equality in a patriarchal society (Sidani, 2019, p. 17; Krane, 2019, p. 23). Women's activism in Saudi Arabia is intertwined with the kingdom's modern history (Langlois and Johnston, 2013, p. 1001). Over the years, activists have used petitions, traveled to state capitals, and utilized the media to push for more rights (Khan and Jalabi, 2024, p. 30). Usual areas of concern are driving, voting, the guardianship system, and dress code (Al-Sharif, 2018, p. 11). Saudi feminism endeavors to empower women to carve out independent identities and public voices (Aldosari, 2016, p. 9, p. 111; Al Obeidli, 2020, p. 28-47). However, the methods and ideas for achieving change are often met with caution and criticism, even though the ultimate goal of empowering women is widely supported (Aldosari, 2016, p. 18; Al Fassi, 2018, p. 24).

Understanding contemporary Saudi feminism requires examining its historical roots and international influences. Increased access to education and media in recent decades has empowered women, making them more aware of gender inequalities and the potential for change. This growing awareness has fueled a movement demanding greater rights and social reforms (Cerioli, 2019, p. 40-64). The Saudi feminist movement gained ground starting from the 1960s onwards. During the 1960s and 1970s significant progress was made through royal

initiatives promoting women's education, the right to work, and participation in public health. These advancements laid the groundwork for future struggles (Doaiji, 2018, p. 117–147). The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a shift in tactics. The 1990s mark a period of increased activism. Women's rights groups, both within the government and independent organizations, began advocating more openly for their needs. This period saw the development of a clearer vision for women's empowerment, drawing on increased education in social sciences among activists. The movement's commitment to institutional change is evident in the 2000 ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This marked a move towards a more open and formal strategy for achieving women's equality within Saudi Arabia (Alhoussein, 2019, p. 1–19; Doaiji, 2018, p. 117–147, Cofman Wittes, 2018, p. 67).

Saudi feminism is a social and political movement advocating for women's rights based on interpretations of the Quran. It pushes for social, economic, and political equality between genders (Sidani, 2019, p. 112; Alkhaled, 2021, p. 950-972). This approach has sparked debate among Islamic scholars, with some arguing for "difference" within Islamic principles for women's rights, while others advocate for full "equality" with men (Kidwai, 2020, p. 67). This debate is known as the "difference versus equality" discussion (Shah, 2024, p. 80; Alrasheed, 2017, p. 88). Proponents of Saudi feminism often see it as a progressive and liberal movement within the broader context of Islamic feminism and the global plight for women's rights (Koelbl and House, 2020, p. 60; Syed and Metcalfe, 2017, p. 408).

Contemporary Saudi feminism is characterized by its multifaceted approach. While some activists work within the existing social and legal framework to push for gradual reforms, others utilize social media and international pressure to advocate for more sweeping changes. Landmark achievements include the right to drive (attained in 2018 after a long strife) and increased opportunities for women in business and education (Koelbl and House, 2020, p. 88; Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 35). Reform encompasses personal status law and human rights (Alsudairy, 2020, p. 34). However, challenges remain, such as the guardianship system and restrictions on political participation. Despite these obstacles, Saudi feminism continues to be a vibrant movement with the potential to significantly reshape the lives of women in the kingdom.

Continuously the Saudi government implements further reforms, though their impact remains contested. In 2023, Saudi Arabia implemented its first codified personal status law, but it came with criticisms for maintaining the male guardianship system and containing provisions seen as enabling domestic violence (Al-Sudairy, 2017, p. 43). In 2024, despite concerns about its human rights record, Saudi Arabia was chosen to chair the UN Commission on the Status of Women, as the country try to boost women's rights via passing laws and enhancing public awareness. This choice sparked controversy among rights groups (Khan and Afra, 2024, p. 11). It is important to note that while there have been some legal changes, there are still concerns about the enforcement of these rights and the overall treatment of women in Saudi Arabia. Key figures in Saudi feminism include Saffar al Hawali, Jamal Al-Subiani and Mai Yamani. The plight for women's rights in Saudi Arabia is ongoing. Fear of disapproval make it difficult to track contemporary activists working within the country (Yildirim, 2020, p. 12).

It has been widely argued by Saudi feminists that the state is failing to address women's problems and that public policy has largely ignored issues of particular concern to women. Whilst there have been improvements in the status of women due to economic and

educational changes, the use of policy to direct social change in the area of women's rights has been minimal (Yildirim, 2020, p. 90; Al Fassi, 2018, p. 24–26; Krane, 2019, p. 77). Often women's problems are oversimplified and it is assumed that the application of general policy will automatically benefit women, without addressing specific areas of concern. Efforts to include women in policy making are apparent and King Salman and Prince Mohamed bin Salman passed laws and encouraged women work and participation in all walks of life (Hubbard, 2020, p. 45; Rundel, 2021, p. 77, 90; Shah, 2024, p. 88).

Cultural and religious interpretations play a significant role in shaping Saudi Arabia's laws regarding women's rights. For example, the ban on women's participation in elections is justified by some using interpretations of Islamic teachings (Al-Rasheed, 2017, p. 100, 127; Kidwai, 2020, p. 88). However, others within Saudi society argue that these texts are open to interpretation and should not bar female participation. This highlights a crucial distinction: the official interpretations used to create policy may differ from how ordinary citizens understand their religion and culture (Al-Sudairy, 2020, p. 101; Tripp, 2019, p. 68, 84). This gap between official interpretations and everyday practices creates a barrier for women's rights advancements (Yildirim, 2020, p. 66; Guta and Karolak, 2015, p. 115-127). As such, Saudi feminism faces challenges. Traditionalists see it as a Western import conflicting with Islamic values. Many are simply unfamiliar with the concept of women's rights advocacy. Feminists struggle to prove their compatibility with Islam and Saudi culture (Syed and Metcalfe, 2017, p. 403, 408, 414). Despite this resistance, there are signs of change. Growing numbers of educated women support feminist causes, especially with evidence highlighting the negative impact of gender discrimination in Saudi Arabia (Ahmed, 2017, p. 70). Feminist debate resulting from the coverage of Rania Al-Baz's incident demonstrates the potential for social change.

Shattering Silence and Sparking Feminist Dialogue

The brutal attack on Rania Al-Baz shattered the usual silence surrounding domestic violence in Saudi Arabia and brought the discussion on women's right to the forefront. Publicizing on the ruthless assault led to public shock. Such events of women abuse were typically kept hidden, shrouded in shame (Shah, 2024, p. 65). Al-Baz's case exploded into the open, sparking a national and international conversation. Within Saudi Arabia, reactions were diverse (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 45). Many were horrified by the violence, regardless of social standing. However, some conservatives criticized Al-Baz for going public, believing it tarnished Saudi Arabia's image and exposed private matters (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 55). They saw it as a negative influence, potentially undermining traditions and the veil's significance. Nonetheless, there was widespread agreement that the abuse was wrong and such brutality should have no place in society.

Disfigured has affected perceptions of domestic violence and gender roles in the Arab world. The nature of the subject matter and Al-Baz's status as a popular icon has gained significant attention from men and women alike. Public opinion in Saudi Arabia is generally misinformed on the nature of domestic violence, often excusing it under the pretense of social permissibility or religious doctrine. The idea of the confidentiality of matrimonial affairs is often used to deflect attention or intervention into such matters. Al-Baz's memoir has dispelled such myths. In relation to the feminist movement in the Arab world, Al-Baz's memoir has made a substantial contribution towards it. Her memoir has become a symbol for Arab women who see Rania as a figure of strength and resilience against the prevalent issues of domestic violence and oppression. Rania's case is not a one-off situation. Her case is a

reflection of what many women in the Arab world face on a daily basis, which is partly why this memoir has attained such recognition. It has empowered women to stand up against the once taboo subject of domestic violence (Shah, 2024, p. 68).

Rania Al-Baz's memoir *Disfigured* created much controversy within the Arab world due to its candid nature and subject matter. While it received criticism from conservatives and traditionalists, it also received praise and acknowledgment from liberals for its effect. The translation of the memoir into Arabic was the cause of much of the controversy as it brought to light a subject matter that many felt would have been better left unspoken (Rehman, 2022, p. 46). Rania received an outpouring of support from her native Saudi Arabia as well as surrounding countries such as Egypt. News channels such as Al-Jazeera and MBC have interviewed Al-Baz regarding her experiences and have expressed interest in her work as a journalist and her potential work as an advocate for domestic violence against women.

Al-Baz's public disclosure of domestic violence has significantly shifted public perception of the issue in Saudi Arabia. Her bravery in sharing her ordeal has transformed domestic violence from a private family matter into a topic of open discussion and criticism. Al-Baz's memoir graphically depicts her abusive relationship and the culminating assault. By bringing this issue into the public eye, she has effectively debunked the myth that domestic violence is solely attributable to wives' disobedience or un-Islamic behavior (Khan, and Jalabi, 2024, p. 34). The incident has sparked a wider conversation about women's roles in Saudi society, suggesting that increased public visibility for women could potentially mitigate domestic violence. While this connection is largely symbolic, it could catalyze broader strides towards gender equality. Al-Baz exemplifies this new role for Saudi women. Despite the ordeal, she resumed her career as a newscaster and is now a vocal advocate for domestic violence victims (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 89).

Cultural factors significantly influence how domestic violence survivors navigate their experiences. These factors can both perpetuate abuse and drive social transformation. As Rania Al-Baz poignantly describes in her memoir, "People do not recognize me anymore. It is as though I've become a different Rania, or as though I've disappeared altogether" (2007, p. 132). The loss of identity she endured mirrors the broader devaluation of Saudi women, often experienced by abuse survivors. Escaping abuse often leads to further challenges, as Al-Baz's experience demonstrates. Her journey to rebuild her life was marked by financial hardship and a struggle to maintain cultural identity. She suffers psychologically, trying to create a new reality while grappling with the trauma and cultural stigma associated with domestic violence. Her memoir reveals the profound impact of abuse on women's lives and the complex interplay between personal and cultural factors. Al-Baz's memoir resonates deeply with readers. Its powerful prose not only evokes a strong emotional response but also provides a window into the often-hidden realities of Saudi Arabian culture.

Al-Baz's story is a powerful narrative of resilience in the face of immense adversity. By publishing her memoir, *Disfigured* she has become a courageous advocate against the deeply ingrained misogyny of her homeland. Her deeply personal account transcends cultural barriers, offering a universal message about domestic violence that resonates with readers around the world. *Disfigured* tackles a complex web of issues, including cultural norms, the influence of religion, and the ongoing fight for women's rights. Al-Baz's story highlights the unfortunate reality that domestic violence affects women everywhere, and her experience underscores that no one should have to go through such horrific abuse. *Disfigured* sheds light on the ongoing struggle for women's rights in some Muslim-majority countries. For the first

25 years of her life, Rania Al-Baz seemed to live a charmed life. Raised in a loving family, she earned multiple degrees and achieved success as a prominent television news anchor in Saudi Arabia. However, her memoir reveals the subtle constraints placed on women in her society and the challenges she faced in her professional life. It is with her marriage that her world irrevocably changes, exposing the stark contrast between the public persona she cultivated and the brutal reality of her private life. The joy of marriage quickly dissolves into a nightmare of oppression, with the abuse beginning just two months in.

Physical and psychological abuse, graphic depictions of brutal beatings, such as a vicious kick to the face that left permanent damage, serve as a stark introduction to the depths of Al-Baz suffering. Initially clinging to the hope that restoring her physical beauty would alter her husband's behavior, Al-Baz ultimately found the strength to defy her abuser after a near-fatal attack. This personal journey of survival aligns with the broader motivations of many women who write about their experiences with domestic violence. As evidenced by the countless memoirs of battered women, the decision to share one's story is often driven by a complex interplay of personal and societal factors. These narratives serve as both cathartic outlets and platforms for social change. In Al-Baz's case, writing her memoir was likely a means to process trauma, reclaim agency, challenge the cultural silence surrounding domestic violence, inspire hope in other survivors and advocate societal and judicial changes.

Rania Al-Baz's memoir sparked a firestorm across the Arab world, bringing domestic violence to the forefront of public consciousness. Her story unleashed a wave of debates and discussions fueled by television interviews, newspaper and magazine articles. This relentless public scrutiny effectively compelled Saudi Arabia to confront the uncomfortable issue of domestic violence, a topic that would otherwise remain shrouded in silence (Ahmed, 2017, p. 88). By bravely sharing her ordeal, Al-Baz ripped away the veil of secrecy surrounding domestic violence in a country where it is often a hidden reality, ignored by both the public and legal system. The shocking details and images of her abuse served as undeniable proof that domestic violence is a serious problem plaguing Saudi Arabia.

The memoir exhibited women limited rights, unequal status and restrictions enforced via judicial system. Saudi Arabia's legal system enforces several restrictions that hinder women's rights (Shah, 2024, p. 88). Saudi women have limited access to the justice system. Women cannot represent themselves in court, requiring a male guardian, creating an unwelcome burden and hindering their ability to seek legal recourse (Sidani, 2019, p. 70). Both Al-Baz in *Disfigured* and Manal Al-Sharif in *Daring to Drive: A Saudi Woman's Awakening* (2018) highlight the pervasive guardianship system. Women are essentially legal minors, forever dependent on male relatives for basic decisions like work, education, and healthcare. This system has delayed or denied women crucial services (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 33; Shah, 2024, p. 87). These restrictions reveal deep gender inequality (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 34). Legislation often discriminates against women, as seen in the guardianship system and limited access to justice (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 55, 200; Ahmed, 2017, p. 88). While Saudi Arabia lacks a codified criminal code, interpretations of Islamic law heavily influenced by conservative traditions often restrict women's rights. This can lead to arbitrary enforcement and discrimination, particularly regarding guardianship (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 98; Ahmed, 2017, p. 110).

The legal framework that systematically disadvantaged Al-Baz and countless other Saudi women became glaringly apparent in the aftermath of her ordeal. The Rania Al-Baz case was a catalyst for change. The light sentence given to her abuser sparked public outrage and

international attention. Al-Baz's vocal advocacy for women's rights earned her significant public support. She became a symbol of resilience and an advocate for feminist reform (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 78; Ahmed, 2017, p. 119). The sentence given to her husband—a few months in jail and 300 lashes—caused public uproar in Saudi Arabia and drew international attention (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 76). As such, Al-Baz decided to launch a foundation to support battered women in the Kingdom (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 79).

As such, Al-Baz memoir explains how Saudi feminists face immense challenges. Strict interpretations of Islamic law, tribal traditions, the judicial system, and a human rights record that undermines women's autonomy create a difficult environment (Shah, 2024, p. 114; Ahmed, 2017, p. 45). Advocating for gender equality is seen as radical, with activists labeled as un-Islamic or agents of Western influence. This not only marginalizes them, but also hinders efforts to build broad-based support, crucial for lasting change. Despite the repression and dangers, the fight for women's rights in Saudi Arabia persists (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 99; Rundel, 2021, p. 34). The silenced voices of feminist activists deserve recognition, and their struggle for a more equitable future must be brought to light (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 88).

Rania Al-Baz's memoir exposes how religion and tradition are deeply intertwined in Saudi Arabia. While Islam provides the foundation, Bedouin customs also influence cultural practices (Aldosari, 2016, p. 25; Al-Baz, 2007, p. 56). Al-Baz's family, though considered more liberal, still adhered to the conservative Wahhabi interpretation of Islam (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 80). This emphasis on strict adherence and gender segregation significantly impacts women's lives. Al-Baz explains how in conservative societies like Saudi Arabia, women carry the burden of family honor. Any deviation from strict norms is seen as jeopardizing a family's reputation and future. This severely restricts women's freedoms. Activities deemed frivolous, like sports or the arts, are discouraged to maintain modesty (Abi-Rafeh and Keeffe, 2023, p. 25). Rania Al-Baz, a prominent advocate for women's rights, exemplifies these challenges. Known for her work with voiceless women, she dared to promote a marathon in Mecca, a highly conservative city. Her efforts to increase women's participation in sports and normalize physical activity for them met fierce resistance (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 44). Religious authorities issued a fatwa (religious ruling) disapproving of women's involvement, and the marathon was ultimately cancelled due to pressure from religious police (Al-Baz, 2007, p. 45). This incident highlights how even seemingly innocuous activities can be seen as transgressive for women. Al-Baz's own career path also reflects these limitations. The economic pressure impacted her directly. Despite her talent and experience, her contract as a TV presenter was not renewed at the age of 36. Her story reflects the demoralizing reality for many Saudi women – a system not yet ready to fully accommodate their aspirations (Alsahi, 2023, p. 2, 5, 76).

At its core, *Disfigured* is a tale about a dramatic shift in identity. This memoir is Al-Baz's defiant act of reclaiming her narrative, proving her strength transcends her suffering. While the journey to self-discovery is central, Al-Baz delves deeper, exploring the gender imbalance in her culture and the challenges Middle Eastern women face in breaking free from domestic expectations to forge their own paths. For many survivors of domestic violence, writing a memoir is a powerful act of healing and empowerment. The experience of abuse can be isolating and shrouded in shame. By sharing their stories, battered women can reclaim their voices and challenge the stigma often associated with victims. Memoirs can also serve as a source of strength and inspiration for other women experiencing abuse, letting them know they are not alone and that there is hope for a future free from violence. Al-Baz's

story is likely just one of many that will inspire courage and self-discovery in the face of adversity.

Feminist Narrative and Writing Techniques

Rania Al-Baz's *Disfigured* is a powerful feminist narrative of identity reshaped by trauma. The once vibrant and celebrated TV personality grapples with a new reality namely fighting for her humanity. Writing *Disfigured* helps her reclaim her narrative, gain agency and support other women. The book delves deeper than just the physical and emotional aftermath of the attack. Al-Baz explores the struggles of women striving to carve out identities beyond their domestic roles. Al-Baz decided to write in English to reach a wider audience and create a wider effect.

Disfigured is a remarkably complex work in which two narratives intertwine: the harrowing account of the attack and her arduous recovery, and a poignant portrayal of her life before. Flashbacks reveal her childhood, her rise to fame, and her experiences as a devoted wife and mother. By weaving flashbacks of her accomplished life before the attack with the harrowing journey of recovery, Al-Baz reclaims her narrative. Al-Baz using various techniques to jump back and forth between the two phases of her life to exhibit bettered women psychological dilemma. Sometimes she uses physical segues, such as when a conversation with concerned doctors about her agitation suddenly triggers a memory involving her now deceased brother. Other times the switch is quite sudden, and the reader is often left for a moment wondering which story Al-Baz is currently telling. Some transitions are triggered by sensory details, such as a conversation with doctors triggering a memory of her deceased brother. Other transitions are abrupt, leaving the reader momentarily disoriented. While this method might cause minor confusion, it serves a purpose. It portrays Al-Baz as a multifaceted individual, not just a victim. The sudden shift to her pre-attack life amplifies the tragedy – a violent rupture of a happy and fulfilling life.

Al-Baz narrative style is feminist as she challenges societal norms and giving voice to hidden experiences. She seeks to subvert patriarchal structures and promote gender equality. Al-Baz focuses on the personal and collective trauma of domestic violence. She employs detailed descriptions, and emotional authenticity to expose injustice and inspire change. Via speaking up and then writing, Al-Baz shatters the stigma surrounding battered women, helps readers gain a deeper understanding of the psychological and emotional impact of domestic violence, and fosters empathy and compassion. Al-Baz inspires other abused women to break their silence, contributing to a broader societal shift in attitudes towards battered women.

Al-Baz utilizes a straightforward linear structure in *Disfigured*. The narrative opens with the horrific 2004 incident that becomes the book's catalyst: her husband's attempt to murder her. This event sparks the central question that haunts her – "Why did you stay with him for so long?" Her response unfolds in a linear fashion. She establishes a peaceful baseline by recounting the early, happy years of their marriage. The narrative then takes a sharp turn, detailing a gradual escalation of abuse that shatters this equilibrium. Al-Baz utilizes the metaphor of "stations" to depict the increasing violence and violations of her safety, each incident intensifying the situation. This structure mirrors Aristotle's concept of tragedy, building steadily towards a climactic event. As she approaches a breaking point, the pace quickens, culminating in the near-death experience that becomes the turning point. Her husband's arrest marks the beginning of her hard-won ascent from this horrific situation. The final pages offer a glimmer of hope for a brighter future, a restored sense of balance.

Disfigured weaves together a rich tapestry of themes namely gender violence, women's segregation, the power of the media, cultural identity, and women's empowerment. Gender violence takes center stage, as Al-Baz recounts the years of brutal physical abuse she endured. The devastating impact on her body and spirit, coupled with the chilling societal silence surrounding domestic violence, reflects a harsh reality for many victims. The memoir further exposes the deep roots of patriarchy, a societal structure that condones male dominance and control over women, ultimately enabling the abuse. Al-Baz's fight for justice transforms into a rebellion against this entrenched system. The power of media also emerges as a key theme. Al-Baz leverages her platform as a television personality to shatter the silence around domestic violence. Her story acts as a catalyst for change, pushing Saudi Arabia to confront and address this critical issue. Finally, themes of national identity and women's empowerment surface. Al-Baz's narrative illuminates the challenges faced by Saudi women and ignites a conversation about their rights. Her transformation from victim to advocate becomes a beacon of hope, inspiring others to break the cycle of violence and claim their agency.

Adept storyteller that she is, Al-Baz weaves symbolism and metaphors throughout the memoir. These figures of speech transcend mere description, allowing readers to viscerally experience the internal struggles she grapples with. By creating layers of meaning, Al-Baz invites readers on a deeper journey, fostering a greater understanding of her experience and the complexities of healing. Al-Baz's transcends the physical scars, delving into the emotional dilemma embarked by the attack. Symbolism becomes her paintbrush, vividly portraying her adversity. Recurring dreams in the final chapter, where she confronts her attacker, symbolize her unresolved anger and a yearning for revenge. However, the realization that he is already imprisoned by his own rage offers a bittersweet closure. The timing of the attack itself is symbolic. Al-Baz describes embracing a healthier lifestyle and newfound self-confidence just before the incident. The disfigurement inflicted becomes a metaphor for the internal pain and shattered sense of self. She feels like a stranger in her own body, beautiful on the inside but forever marked by the violence. The irony is that attempting to hide these scars with scarves and sunglasses only draws unwanted attention.

Conclusion

Rania Al-Baz's memoir, *Disfigured* holds profound relevance in shedding light on the pervasive issue of domestic violence, particularly within the context of Saudi Arabia. By courageously sharing her personal ordeal, Al-Baz shattered the silence surrounding domestic abuse, challenging cultural taboos and stereotypes. Her narrative served as a catalyst for public discourse, prompting a much-needed conversation about the treatment of women in Saudi society and enhancing feminist discourse. Al-Baz's memoir, *Disfigured*, transcends a mere chronicle of abuse. It is a defiant roar for identity. Al-Baz writes to reclaim herself, not just from the scars but from the status of being a victim. Her memoir exposes the cultural constraints on Middle Eastern women, the struggle to defy expectations and forge their own paths. By sharing her story, she shatters the stigma of domestic violence, reclaims her voices, breaks free from the shackles of societal shame, and inspires battered women. Language and techniques, like the strategic choice of writing in English and the use of figures of speech become weapons in Al-Baz's arsenal, empowering her to enforce her message on a global level.

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