

LEILA KHALED



A member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Leila Khaled is an icon of Palestinian Liberation. Born in 1944 in Haifa, Palestine, her family became refugees as part of the 1948 Palestinian exodus. At 15, she followed in the footsteps of her brother and joined the pan-Arab Arab Nationalist Movement.

In 1969, she was accepted for military training in PFLP's Special Operations Squad. At 25, she became infamous as the first woman in the world to hijack an aircraft. Khaled underwent six plastic surgery operations to transform her face after an infamous photograph of her holding an AK-47 rifle and wearing a kaffiyeh was reproduced in many publications, making her an icon.

In 1970, she commandeered another flight from Nicaragua with a colleague. The plane was forced to land in England, where Khaled was held by the British government and eventually released in a prisoner exchange. Khaled repeatedly stated that the aim was to gain international recognition of the political plight facing Palestinians and the desire for self-determination. In the 1990s, she denounced the Oslo Accords, calling them fundamentally flawed because they did not address the status of Jerusalem, the ending of the Israeli occupation, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, or Palestinian sovereignty. Although her actions are considered terrorism by many in the West, she has achieved the status of political icon throughout much of the Arab world.



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Leila Khaled In Her Own Words (ADL)

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SOURCES

Films, First Hand. "Watch Leila Khaled HIJACKER ONLINE: Vimeo on Demand." Vimeo, 28 July 2021, vimeo.com/ondemand/leilakhaled.

"G2: Profile of Palestinian Fighter Leila Khaled." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 26 Jan. 2001, www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jan/26/israel.

"Leila Khaled: In Her Own Words." Anti-Defamation League, 2 Oct. 2020, www.adl.org/blog/leila-khaled-in-her-own-words.