



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN PALESTINE
FACTSHEET

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SITUATION

Women worldwide endure violence under various pretexts. When women at every corner of the world talk about violence, they understand and feel very well the meaning of suffering, humiliation and pain. The pain and suffering which are caused by violence against women is not a momentary or single event with short or long-term damages only on their health status. Continuous denial of access to their fundamental rights desolates the inner strength of women and the pillars of their entity steadily.

In Palestine, women and girls continue to experience various kinds of violence at home and within their society. It is a structural violence including discriminatory laws, traditional practices, domestic violence from family members and intimate partners. Simultaneously, there is a severe shortage of anti-violence services, shelters and social support system in the country. Within this context, the violence perpetrated by the Israeli military forces contribute to the increase of cases.

Although there is a significant lack of comprehensive and central data on violence, (last reliable statistic are from the PCBS in 2011)¹ and a difficulty to get information from women's organizations and service providers, some evidence attest that the level of violence (in its various kinds) is getting worse being aggravated during escalation of political violence.

TYPOLGY OF VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence takes place when there is imbalance in power equation and when one abuses his/ her power against the other. This factsheet focuses mostly on women because they are more disadvantaged in society and experience violence in their every day's life.

For the purpose of clarity, the typology of violence is presented separately, although it is known that GBV is a complex interweaving of behaviors that create the abuser's power and control over the victim.



¹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Violence survey in the Palestinian Society*, 2011

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is the main reported form of violence experienced by Palestinian women. According to most recent Sawa's² data on domestic violence (950 cases reported in 2015), 18% of women are victims of sexual abuse, 12% rape, 15% neglect and 2% witnessing of violence.

Furthermore, these data reveal that the highest rate of abuse takes place in Gaza Governorate (28%) and Hebron Governorate (25%).

Regarding the age group, it has been noticed that women/girls who experienced the highest rate of almost all type of violence are between 16-18 years old (24%) and the second age group is between 21-25 years (23%), while the third age group is between 26-35 years old (20%).

RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

Data evidence also a very high percentage of rape outside the family up to 20%, together with 6% attempted rape, 3% of indecent behavior and 18% of unspecified abuse.

CHILD MARRIAGE

Child marriage is relatively high in Palestine and marriage age of every one out of ten women is between 15 to 19 years old³. Once these young girls are married, they are placed in a precarious position and they have to deal with the complexities of married life and child-bearing, while having very little experience to refer to and being in need of becoming more mature on emotional and psychological levels. Some of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy occur in Palestine, where one in every 10 women who are between 15 to 19 years old give birth every year. The risks surrounding early pregnancy and childbirth are well documented, and combined with other wide-ranging health implications.

Violence against males

Sawa statistics show that males are more exposed to violence outside the family.

From a total of 254 recorded calls, 146 cases of abuse and violence and 33 cases of rape outside the family have been reported (age range category 13-15 and 19-21 years old).

As for the abuses within the family 13 cases of sexual abuse and 4 cases of rape have been reported (age range category 19-21 and 26-35 years old).

² The Palestinian ngo "Sawa-All the women together today and tomorrow" provides since 1999 a hotline services for women victims of violence. The data presented in this factsheet relies on SAWA's hotline statistic from January to 16 November 2015.

³ Médecins du monde, *Early Marriage in Palestine: Survey of the physical and psychological impact on girls subject to early marriage*, 2011 (

FEMICIDE

Palestinian women's organizations reports and statements suggest that the majority of the women who die from femicide are killed by their male family members. The "Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization Against Domestic Violence Against Women" (Al-Muntada) affirms that 20 women were killed until today in West Bank and Gaza⁴.

GAZA

Out of 39.6% of women who experienced domestic violence, more than 60% experienced at least two different types of violence, and 6.3% all types. Emotional violence is highly correlated with other types of violence; only a quarter of women who experienced violence, experienced emotional violence alone. In particular, economic and physical violence often occurred together with psychological abuse.

Never-married women, on average 7.5 years younger than ever-married women, more often experience emotional, physical and economic violence; 33 of the 74 never-married women reported experiencing this which is 44.6%. Most of the never-married women experienced violence by their fathers, brothers, mothers and sisters: Streets, public places, workplaces, prisons, homes and high-density areas such as refugee camps are the places where violence and abuses against women occur.

The most frequently type of abuse is psychological which manifests in not letting women express their opinions, economic deprivations, cursing, threat of divorce, marrying a second wife and cheating on wife. Increase of child marriage also has been observed particularly in connection with displacement and when families have to live with extended families in overcrowded conditions. Sexual violence is not something that openly can be talked about and that is due to stigma, shame and social pressures⁵.

SHELTERS

Palestinian women victims of gender-based violence in the West Bank have chance of escaping violence by referring to the three shelters of Mehwar center in Bethlehem, Jericho center and Nablus centers⁶.

⁴ This according to the last data given on the 23 November 2015 by Al-Muntada coordinator

⁵ *Violence against women in the gaza strip after the israeli military operation protective edge 2014* - Catherine Müller and Laila Barhoum and Commissioned by Alianza por la Solidaridad and ActionAid, 2015

⁶ The data have been provided by the directors of the shelters.

While shelter in Jericho is an emergency center for the short term sheltering of women and girls victims of violence or their life is at risk, the other two shelters in Nablus and Bethlehem provide long-term services including psychological, social and legal counseling and programs on socio-economic empowerment.

In 2015, the three shelters received a total number of 115 abused women whose ages range between 14 to 55 years old (with a high rate between 18-35 years old) from all over the West Bank, especially Hebron area. The target group is made up of women who are subjected to all kinds of violence, in particular domestic violence (from the husband and his relatives -if married – or from the family of origin’s members) which mostly include sexual abuse, physical and economic violence. The violence they are subjected to often leads the young girl to run away from their homes and for this reason they are referred to the shelters. It is reported that girls under 18 experienced sexual harassment and sexual abuse besides other kinds of violence.

The abused women who seek protection usually are sheltered with their children. In 2015 a total number of 53 children have been hosted in the three shelters.

Mehwar Center also provides external social and legal counseling services and it provided 64 cases with psycho-social counseling and 53 legal counseling and follow-up which are mostly about the issues of divorce, alimony and children’s custody.

THE LAW TO PROTECT FAMILY FROM VIOLENCE

In 2015, work has continued on improving the draft of “The Law to Protect Family from Violence” in order to ensure that it is in agreement with the international human rights standards and it provides greater protection to victims of violence, particularly women and children, and holds perpetrators accountable for their crimes. On 27 April, 2015, Italy and EUPOL COPPS, in partnership with MoWA, MoSA, and MoJ organized the international conference on “*Status of play and good practices. The Draft Law to Protect Family from Violence “D-LPFV”*”. Soon after this event some Members States of the EU-Gender Technical Working Group, such as Italy, EUPOL COPPS, Denmark and Germany, together with USAID and UNDP/UN WOMEN worked on the Italian proposal for the “*Donors Joint Recommendations on the Draft Law for the Protection of the Family from Violence*”. Therefore, the Joint Recommendations were consolidated in English and Arabic and submitted by the Consulate General of Italy to the Council of Ministers on 22 September 2015.

The Technical Committee on the D-LFPV established by the Council of Ministers (CoM), in June 2015 and it is presently working on the final draft of The Law that according to UN Women (member of the Technical Committee) has incorporated most of the “Joint Recommendations”, and in particular:

- Marital rape is considered a crime
- Improvement of the definitions (i.e. gender-based violence, victim, perpetrator...)
- When an incest case is reported even by an adult woman, apportioning blame and punishment will be commensurate to the history of violence against the victim and the balance of power between the last and the perpetrator
- Increase of penalties on the perpetrator

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS ON GBV

The European donor active in combating GBV are Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Sweden and EUPOL COOPS mission and they support a total of 10 projects addressing GBV (ref. EU-Gender Technical Working Group - EU-GTWG - mapping, updated 2015) in partnership with local and international NGOs, ILOs, Palestinian Ministries (MoWA, MoSA, MoJ, MoH) and institutions, and the Police Family Protection Units. The intervention sectors are Economic Development, Social Protection, Justice, and Health.

According to the UNFPA mapping of combating GBV projects in Palestine during 2014: “the main area of interventions is training/capacity development, that together with awareness make up for around 37% of interventions both in West Bank and Gaza. Prevention appears to be stronger than response at the level of services. 9% of respondents provide services in West Bank and 7% in Gaza. Among the services provided the higher percentage covers the provision of psychosocial support for victims of GBV, and the weakest is the health response. Projects and programs mapped by UNFPA are in line with the national priorities and 93% of them contribute to accomplish some of the strategic objectives of the “national strategy to combat violence against women in 2011-2019”⁷.

⁷ UNFPA mapping GBV services - 2014