

ANNUAL REPORT | 2021

Learning, Sharing Knowledge, Mobilizing
the Society & Empowering Palestinian
Women Through Innovation to Create
Change.



2021

WCLAC Annual Report

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والتغيير

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Society & Empowering Palestinian Women
Through Innovation to Create Change.**

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Introductory Note by WCLAC's General Director

The year 2021 marked the 30th Anniversary of the efforts of the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling in forwarding women's human rights towards gender equality. A year, like all previous ones, filled with numerous and compounded challenges at the national and international levels, especially with continued Israeli colonial occupation, the continued global spread of COVID-19 with its disproportionate adverse impact on women, and the enhanced patriarchal structures within society and counter smear campaigns and defamation of WCLAC and feminist organizations by conservative elements within society. In addition to the internal violations of rights and freedoms including the right to speech, media and peaceful assembly and protests, emerging after the killing by Palestinian activist Nizar Banat by Palestinian security agencies. These violations specifically targeted young women activists and young women journalists who were covering the events.

This is also combined with the shrinking spaces of civil society organizations by both Palestinian and Israeli authorities, making it more difficult for civil society organizations to work with drained sources of funding and attempts to control the work of NGOs by imposing restrictions and attempts to amend the existing Palestinian NGO Law. The most remarkable measure taken was by Israeli Authorities in stigmatizing six Palestinian prominent human rights and civil-society organizations as "terrorist organizations" according to the Israeli "Anti-Terrorist" Law.

Despite all challenges, WCLAC continued to work diligently in the provision of individual rights for women victims of gender-based violence (GBV) through providing free legal aid and counselling and litigating on their behalf in family courts. WCLAC also continued to consolidate its efforts to influence Palestinian public policies, laws and legislation to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination. By launching its five-years' strategic plan (2021-2025) WCLAC enhanced the outreach programs and developed a third more structured component to its work through the social mobilization program, where WCLAC endeavored on developing new partnerships with youth clubs, women activists' groups, young men and women volunteers, and enhanced partnership programs with community-based organizations to ensure wider spread reach-out programs. The purpose is to reach out the most remote areas to develop the capacities of these groups in becoming agents of change in their local communities to adhere change and confront organized counter campaigns which we were witnessing. Through developing different hubs, WCLAC aims at developing a feminist human rights discourse within society that can help in wider social mobilization of different actors towards achieving gender equality and combatting GBV.

Program staff at the Services and Social Empowerment Unit continued to develop initiatives to provide wider protection to women victims of GBV through widening our protection networks and protection committees and enhancing the national referral system of women victims of GBV. On the other hand program staff at the Advocacy Unit made all efforts to build new partnerships, coalitions and networks at the national level to influence policies and legislation. They also worked at the international level to expose Israeli violations against Palestinian women in international forums through utilizing UN treaty-based machinery and special procedures to highlight the gendered impact of Israeli violations on women and girls and conduct advocacy efforts to call on the international community hold Israel, the occupying power accountable for its systematic human rights violations against women.

WCLAC 2021 annual report with its political brief provides detailed information on the context in which we work, and highlights both achievements and obstacles faced, as well as mitigating measures undertaken to respond to emerging risks and challenges. The report in and by itself is self-explanatory.

I would therefore wish to focus the remaining part of my note this year on how the absence of democracy, the rule of law, rights and freedoms can negatively impact the enjoyment of women to their rights, and jeopardize all our efforts towards achieving gender equality, especially when these intersect with an absence of a political will towards women's rights and gender equality. The internal events developing aftermath the death of activist Nizar Banat and how security agencies specifically dealt with women activists and journalist, raises a red flag to the absence of the rule of law and democracy within the Palestinian society, which might jeopardize the enjoyment of all citizens to their rights, specifically women and girls.

There is no doubt that only within a democratic, pluralistic environment can we achieve a win-win situation, where the political system can maintain itself, ensure its sustainability, preserve safety and public order for all citizens, and ensure that both duty-bearers and rights-holders are well aware of their rights and obligations. This can be achieved through the separation of powers and ensuring that the executive authority does not encroach on the legislative and judicial authorities. Rule of law is only achieved when all citizens, men and women, can resort to the law and the judiciary to guarantee their rights and be assured that the legal and judicial system ensures equality, is free of discrimination, and respects human rights.

We all fully understand that the Israeli military occupation is the root cause of all problems within the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and the main obstacle to enjoying our rights, be they civil, political, economic, social, or cultural. It goes without saying that due to the occupation, we face serious challenges in achieving our right to self-determination and a sovereign Palestinian state with full control over our land and resources. Palestinian women, however, face multiple layers of oppression as women living under occupation. They face a double jeopardy of structural patriarchy and colonial occupation, particularly in terms of traditional sexual division of labor and the unpaid care-duties that women undertake within the family and society.

The Palestinian government cannot justify violations of human rights and women's rights under the pretext of occupation, especially after the accession of Palestine to numerous international human rights conventions and treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Palestine holds a legal obligation to ensure respect for human rights, specifically women's rights, and it is also legally bound to take all necessary administrative, constitutional, and legislative measures to ensure gender equality, the rule of law, respect of rights and freedoms, and access to justice for all citizens. The Palestinian official duty-bearers often justify their reluctance to pass the Family Protection Bill and/ or their lack of commitment to their legal obligations under CEDAW and other human rights principles, under the pretext of the "social and cultural specificity" of our society and the controversial debate that is created within society every time there are efforts towards the harmonization of national legislation with international human rights principles. The Palestinian government backs up its argument by Constitutional Court Decision No. 4 of 2017, which states that "international treaties and conventions would not be enforced if they opposed the Palestinian religious and cultural heritage." During the review of the initial report of Palestine, the CEDAW committee confirmed that, despite this ruling, the State of Palestine remains legally bound to abide by CEDAW. This was further reiterated in the concluding remarks and recommendations of the CEDAW committee. In my opinion, within the existing patriarchal structures, governments have the "due diligence" responsibility to address negative social and cultural norms by taking concrete measures to

remedy any discrimination and/or prejudice against any individual or social group, and hence have the legal obligation to take all necessary measures to ensure gender equality and the protection of women from GBV.

On more than one occasion, Palestinian feminists and human rights defenders have witnessed inaction and reservation in taking meaningful measures to protect activists and their organizations when attacked by conservative elements within society. Women and girls have often been left alone to fight political and social conservative elements who, in turn, at times defamed them, incited against them, and indirectly allowed for violence against them only because these women and girls called for policies and legislation based on gender equality, and measures to protect women and girls who are victims of GBV. Palestinian women activists had to fight their battles on their own and were left at the forefront to fight against all counter-campaigns and gender stereotypes that militarized themselves with negative social and cultural arguments that undermine women and girls and relegate them to a lower status only because of their gender. Official statements made by government officials and official duty-bearers during these counter campaigns against the passage of the Family Protection Bill (FPB), for example, reflected indirect violations of women's rights by complicity, omission, or inaction. Officials have ignored the urgent need for the law to protect women victims of GBV or potential victims of femicide, as they continued to pass hundreds of less important laws by presidential decrees that hold the power of law. All our efforts in lobbying and advocacy towards the adoption of this law and the amendment of numerous other legislations that clearly discriminate against women were in vain, thereby obstructing the rights of women to access justice.

In a recent study conducted by the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling and based on Palestinian court rulings in 22 cases of GBV and murder attempts, we concluded that the discriminatory legislation, combined with the high level of discretion given to the judges and the privileges that men enjoy through patriarchal structures that are deeply rooted in customs and traditions, as well as the mentality of the judges, were all factors that discourage women from resorting to courts to lodge their complaints and also reduce their expectations of accessing justice through the law and judiciary. In almost all instances it seems that women were pressured by family and society to withdraw their cases. Perpetrators were given light sentences and some cases were even dropped after waving personal rights, while the public prosecution did not pursue public interest rights in most of the cases. Women breaking the silence and lodging complaints or filing cases received the message that the judicial system would not do them justice, and consequently, they would be reluctant in the future to report cases of violence or gender-based crimes against them.

It goes without saying that the targeting of women during recent demonstrations reinforces negative cultural and social perceptions about the roles of women and girls within society and the public sphere. It further encourages the reinforcement of patriarchal structures and sexual stereotyping, and invites violence and exclusion of women from public life. It also threatens the societal hegemony. Government officials should be the first and foremost to refrain from violent acts and violations of rights and encourage public order and respect for laws and procedures. Decision-makers should make sure that they take the lead and provide instructions to the security level and government officials to respect the law. We want to see that those who violate the law and target peaceful female protesters are held accountable and that no one is above the law. We Palestinians – officials, decision-makers, and ordinary citizens – want to direct our attention towards our main enemy, the occupation, which means ending the prolonged military occupation. We also want to pursue our efforts to build a democratic and just society where all citizens, men and women, can enjoy their rights while being protected by the rule of law.

Special thanks to all WCLAC staff for their diligent and committed work during 2021 which truly reflect their high commitment to the core values, vision and mission our organization. They always show readiness to work under pressure and in difficult situations. A sincere thank you for our committed Board of Trustees and General Assembly who support our work and facilitate our paths to conduct our work with passion and professionalism. Finally, a special thank you for all WCLAC partners and donors who believed in our work and supported us to ensure WCLAC's sustainability and continuity of its work over the past 30 years and more to come. We sincerely believe that without their trust in our work and their generous contributions we would have not been able to continue with our mission and pursue our goals towards a better world with gender equality, non-discrimination and enjoyment of women to their rights.

**Randa Siniora
General Director**

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Part I. Summary Report

Political Brief



Part I. Summary Report

Political Brief

The year 2021 began amidst challenges remaining from the previous year – the health crisis of COVID-19 has continued to evolve, and with it the growth of inequalities and vulnerabilities among marginalized groups, as well as a protracted economic crisis. The challenges have since multiplied with an escalation of political insecurity, violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and a resurgence of violence and Israel's military aggression on the Gaza Strip. For Palestinian women, the situation has been characterized by a high level of fear, insecurity and a particular vulnerability to violence. In addition, women have continued to bear the brunt of the multiple crises by shouldering an increase of caregiving and household responsibilities.

This section of the annual report outlines the main events and political developments of the year, and how they have affected the lives and human rights of Palestinian women. **Section I** of the political brief begins with looking at how COVID-19 and its consequences have continued to play out in the past six months. **Section II** turns to the IHL violations that have continued to persist, with a focus on house demolitions, settler violence and the blockade against the Gaza Strip. In **Section III** the escalation of violence and hostilities between Israel and the Gaza Strip is explored, and how Israeli aggressions have impacted Palestinian women. **Section IV** calls attention to human rights violations that have specifically targeted women throughout the reporting period, with a focus on gender-based violence (GBV), femicide and the harassment of women human rights defenders (WHRDs). Finally, in **Section V** other main political developments are outlined, including the postponing of the Palestinian elections, the swearing-in of a new Israeli government, and the ruling of the International Criminal Court (ICC) which concluded jurisdiction in the OPT and Israel.

I. The consequences of COVID-19 continue to play out

Health crisis

Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to significantly impact Palestine and Palestinian women throughout 2021. When the year began, the number of cases per day was declining, but these began escalating once more in February, reaching an all-time high of almost 2900 new cases daily in mid-April (see Figure 1). Since then, the number of cases has reduced drastically,¹ In August and September a new wave of reaching around 200 new cases per day in mid-June. COVID-19 began resulting in a remarkable increase of cases on daily basis. According to UNICEF by the end of December, some 470,087 cases of COVID-19 had been confirmed, of whom 50 per cent were women and 12 per cent were children.² Nevertheless, the health crisis is a reality that all Palestinians continue to grapple with. The health system was already in a fragile state, especially in the Gaza Strip where the Israeli blockade has significantly limited Palestinians' ability to access health care and medication. COVID-19 has further aggravated this situation, and the health care system will struggle to recover from this crisis. As is often the case, the difficulty to access health care and medication seems to disproportionately affect already vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women. This is primarily due to social structures, and the difficulty or inability of vulnerable groups to exercise their rights and assert their needs when resources are scarce.³

1 Worldometers, 'State of Palestine COVID: 315,641 Cases and 3,587 Deaths - Worldometer', available at: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/state-of-palestine/> accessed 17 July 2021.

2 <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/unicef-state-palestine-humanitarian-situation-report-report-no>

3 To compare, see eg: WHO, 'Poorest and most marginalized women continue to be most at risk of maternal death', World Health Organization, available at: <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/news/maternal-death/en/> accessed 17 July 2021.

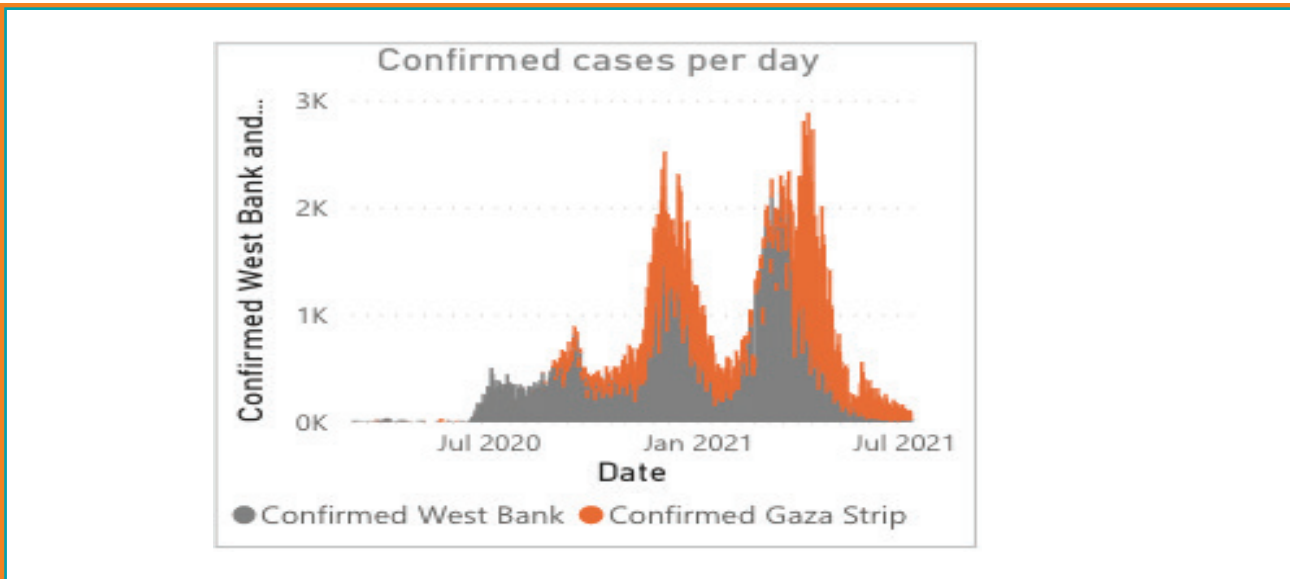


Figure 1. Confirmed cases of COVID-19 per day in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Graphic by WHO accessed at <http://www.emro.who.int/countries/pse/index.html>

During this health crisis, women have also continued to bear a disproportionate responsibility for caretaking and unpaid housework. Women's rights organizations have pointed out that women have been expected to carry a heavier load of care due to the increased need, and overburdened health care systems.⁴ This has caused high levels of stress and mental health struggles among women, which has also been noticeable for WCLAC in consultations with supported women. Women throughout Palestine have been left feeling overburdened and lacking support as the crisis endures, risking a mental health crisis alongside the on-going pandemic.

In addition, numerous reports have continued to be published showing the effect that the pandemic and associated restrictions have had on women's health and safety. As is often the case with long running crises, less attention has been given to the secondary impacts of the pandemic as time has moved on. However, women continue to suffer disproportionately from an increase of GBV, economic hardship, unemployment and lack of access to information and health care.⁵ These issues are further explored and developed in Section IV below.

Economic crisis

The year 2020 finished on a dire note as Palestine recorded a 12 per cent decline in GDP, fuelled by the pandemic, lockdowns and the blocking of tax revenues that were due to be transferred from Israel.⁶ The economic consequences of COVID-19 have continued to play out throughout 2021. The Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland, expressed concern in the beginning of the year that although the number of active cases of COVID-19 had decreased, "the cost of lives and livelihoods remained high, particularly in the Gaza Strip".⁷ He also noted that "it may take years for the economy of Palestine to recover".⁸ In April, the World Bank predicted a "modest bounce back" in the Palestinian economy throughout the year, but also noted that Palestine's ability to control the economic crisis is limited due to the lack of a national currency

5 UNSCO, 'BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (25 March 2021)', available at: https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security_council_briefing_-_25_march_2021_2334.pdf accessed 23 March 2021a.

6 PCBS (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics), 'Palestine in Figures', available at: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2557.pdf> accessed 17 July 2021.

7 UNSCO, 'BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (26 January 2021)', available at: https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security_council_briefing_-_26_january_2021_2.pdf accessed 23 March 2021b.

8 UNSCO, 'BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (26 February 2021)', available at: https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security_council_briefing_-_26_february_2021_0.pdf accessed 23 March 2021c.

and monetary policy tools, as well as the uncertainty surrounding the accessibility of vaccines.⁹

A high rate of unemployment has long been one of Palestine's primary economic concerns, and this has been further exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic. Unemployment has continued to be particularly high throughout the year, especially in industries affected by COVID-19 such as tourism, the restaurant business and construction. Vulnerable groups have been especially targeted by this, and women are no exception. According to the PCBS, the number of unemployed persons reached 389 thousand in the 3rd quarter of 2021; of which 253 thousand persons in Gaza Strip and 136 thousand people in the West Bank. Hence, the disparity remains large in the unemployment rate between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as this rate reached 47% in Gaza Strip compared to 16% in the West Bank. As for the sex level, the unemployment rate for males in Palestine reached 22% compared to 43% for females.¹⁰

The increase in women's unemployment is particularly troubling considering the patriarchal cultural norms and social structures that are already impeding women's ability to make their own living. Women's entrepreneurship has taken a particular hit during the economic crisis, meaning that women who have fought hard to overcome patriarchal norms and open their own businesses have now seen their dreams and efforts evaporate. In the Gaza Strip, 98 per cent of women-led small businesses had had to close their operations by the end of 2020.¹¹ In addition, because of prevalent patriarchal structures, women are overrepresented in the informal sector and are thus at a higher risk of lacking social protection and benefits. This is likely to increase long term poverty and social vulnerability among women especially. In 2021 there is still a large gap in the labour force participation rate between males and females, about 7 out of 10 of males participated in the labour force, compared with about 2 out of 10 of females, and the rate of female participation in the labour force was 17% compared to 69% for males

On Labour Day of 2021, ***WCLAC commemorated the day*** by calling for justice and equality for all working women and by highlighting the compounded challenges that Palestinian working women have suffered during the on-going crisis. Working women have indeed found themselves among the most vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, but remain a highly deprioritized group as beneficiaries, especially that women are mostly employed in the informal sector, unpaid agricultural and family business. When employed, they are employed in traditional jobs and are paid much lower than the minimal wages. By end of 2021 the percentage of women heading the household was about 12% in Palestine (12% in the West Bank and 11% in Gaza Strip in 2021)¹².

Moving forward, the economic crisis at hand will remain one of the greatest challenges for Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority has issued a recovery plan in order to meet these challenges. However, in order to address the particular vulnerability of women and other marginalized groups, a more gender sensitive and intersectional approach is needed in the rebuilding of the Palestinian economy. To this end, WCLAC and other civil society organizations continue to demonstrate the realities facing Palestinian women, and point at the support needed in order to build economic recovery and full realization of women's rights in parallel.

9 World Bank, 'Palestinian Territories' Economic Update — April 2021, available at: {<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/publication/economic-update-april-2021>} accessed 17 July 2021a.

10 <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4109>

11 <https://www.cidse.org/2020/12/18/palestinian-women-in-the-gaza-strip-between-siege-and-covid-19/>

12 <https://pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4186>

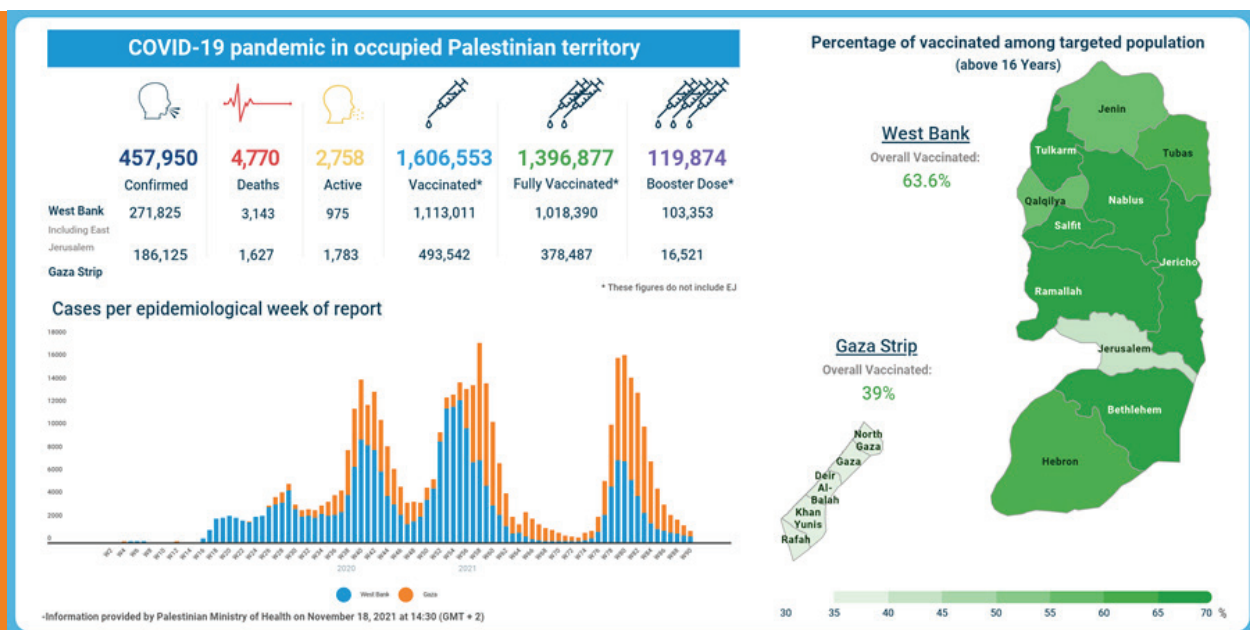
Vaccines and the obligations of Israel as an occupying power

2021 has also seen the start of a new phase in the COVID-19 crisis, with the development and administering of vaccines. Securing vaccines has been a significant challenge for Palestine, despite large efforts by Palestinian authorities and UN agencies. Allocations have been received three times so far through the COVAX scheme, and have been distributed throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹³

The ability to access vaccines in the Gaza Strip has been a particular concern, seeing as the borders are strictly controlled by Israeli authorities, and most importantly due to the highly limited access to electricity which is needed to store the frozen vaccines. These logistical challenges are a direct consequence of the Israeli occupation, and further increase the humanitarian suffering of the already highly vulnerable population of the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, Israel has launched one of the world's largest vaccination campaigns this year, accessing an exceptionally large number of vaccine doses after having signed a deal with Pfizer-BioNTech in which they provided medical data in exchange for the large number of vaccines.¹⁴ Human rights advocates worldwide have emphasized Israel's responsibility as an occupying power to uphold the health rights of Palestinians, including extending vaccinations to the Palestinian population. As an occupying power, Israel has an obligation both under international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) to uphold the health of the Palestinian population. Given Israel's access to vaccines and the vaccination campaign directed toward the Israeli population, the discrimination of the Palestinian population is both unlawful and highly concerning. The legal underpinnings of Israel's obligation to vaccinate Palestinians are further outlined below.

Human rights experts have also called upon third states to meet their obligations in terms of supporting Palestine in efforts to secure vaccines and health care supplies, as well as exerting pressure on Israel to stop on-going violations of IHL and health-related human rights in relation to the COVID-19 crisis.¹⁵



13 UNICEF, 'State of Palestine receives its third allocation of COVID-19 vaccines', available at: <https://www.unicef.org/sop/press-releases/state-palestine-receives-its-third-allocation-covid-19-vaccines> accessed 17 July 2021

14 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-55879337>

15 Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre, 'COVID-19 and obligations of third states', available at: <https://www.diakonia.se/ihl/news/news/covid-19-pal-estine-legal-obligations-third-states/> accessed 17 July 2021 .

Fact check: Legal underpinnings for Israel's obligations to extend vaccinations to the Palestinian population

- ICESCR, article 12.1: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health."
- Hague Convention IV, Article 43: "The authority of the legitimate power having in fact passed into the hands of the occupant, the latter shall take all the measures in his power to restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country."
- Geneva Convention IV, Article 55: "To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring the food and medical supplies of the population; it should, in particular, bring in the necessary foodstuffs, medical stores and other articles if the resources of the occupied territory are inadequate. [...]"
- Geneva convention IV, Article 56: "To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining, with the cooperation of national and local authorities, the medical and hospital establishments and services, public health and hygiene in the occupied territory with particular reference to the adoption and application of the prophylactic and preventive measures necessary to combat the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics [...]"
- Geneva Convention IV, Article 59: "If the whole or part of the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, the Occupying Power shall agree to relief schemes on behalf of the said population, and shall facilitate them by all the means at its disposal.[...]"

Despite these efforts, health care in the form of vaccines has not been extended to the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in a meaningful way. The vaccination support offered by Israel has instead been limited to small allocations and the vaccination of Palestinian workers in Israel.¹⁶ In June, an agreement was made between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA), in which Palestine was supposed to receive over one million doses of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines. However, the deal was cancelled on June 18th when it was discovered that the vaccines would expire in June, rather than July or August as was first believed.¹⁷ This caused outrage among Palestinians and further highlighted the fundamental lack of respect for Palestinians' right to health during the on-going crisis.

Also, within Palestine there have been serious concerns voiced by human rights and civil society groups concerning the unfair distribution of vaccines. When vaccines began being distributed earlier in the year, doses were given to governmental ministers, politicians and the Palestinian football team inter alia, raising concerns of favoritism and nepotism. Human rights groups have also raised concerns that the vaccination programme has lacked transparency, making it impossible to evaluate the prioritization of populations most in need and track unfair distribution.¹⁸

Deepening of gender roles

Alongside these serious humanitarian concerns, WCLAC and other women's rights organizations have also borne witness to an alarming backslide in women's emancipation. As mentioned above, women across the world have found themselves bearing a disproportionate load of unpaid labour and care throughout the pandemic.¹⁹ In Palestine, where traditional and patriarchal gender roles are already deeply entrenched, this is believed to have had an even greater impact. Women supported by WCLAC report being relayed back to more traditional and gender stereotypical roles, including women who were previously employed now being confined to household work. This has been particularly evident for mothers whose children were not in school for much of the past year and a half due to COVID-19 related closures. Considering the painstaking efforts that have been necessary in order to increase women's participation in the workforce in recent years, it may take many years to counteract the backlash that COVID-19 and associated restrictions have caused.

In addition, the heavy burden that women have carried is likely to have had a negative impact on their mental health. As WCLAC has witnessed through multiple crises and recurring IHL violations throughout the years, it is most often women that bear the responsibility of caring for affected family members and healing trauma. Within these patriarchal structures, the pandemic has demanded of women that they care for sick relatives, maintain the hygiene and sanitation of their homes, care for children when schools have closed and also heal the trauma of whole families affected by sickness, death, fear and significantly deepened economic hardship. Women supported by WCLAC report feeling overwhelmed, tired and struggling to uphold their own mental health in the middle of the on-going crisis. Meanwhile, support for women in this respect has been highly limited in both crisis management and recovery plans.

16 BBC News, 'Israel to transfer 5,000 vaccine doses to Palestinians', available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-55879337> accessed 17 July 2021.

17 Reuters, 'Palestinians cancel deal for near-expired COVID vaccines from Israel | Reuters', available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-give-palestinians-1-million-covid-vaccine-doses-israeli-statement-2021-06-18/> accessed 17 July 2021.

18 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/3/palestinian-authority-under-fire-for-vip-vaccines>

19 CARE Palestine, Gender Rapid Assessment: A Summary of Early Gender Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, March 2020.

II. IHL violations continue to escalate

Despite the continuation of the pandemic and economic crisis, Israeli IHL violations have continued to be carried out throughout the year of 2021. During the reporting period of 1 January – 30 December, 18,796 Palestinians were injured in violent incidents related to the occupation and 339 Palestinians were killed.^{20 21} An increase of IHL violations and tensions eventually led to the escalation of violence and hostilities between Israel and the Gaza Strip as is further developed below in Section III. First however, we turn to the on-going issues of house demolitions and settler violence both of which have persisted throughout 2021. The effects of the illegal blockade against the Gaza Strip have also been more tangible than ever in the on-going crisis.

Demolitions

Between January 1st and December 30th 2021, 906 Palestinian structures have been demolished by Israeli forces, displacing 1,205 Palestinians. Out of these structures, 220 were donor-funded. The most affected areas have been Jerusalem (with 178 demolished structures and 345 displaced persons) and Tubas (184 structures, 362 displaced people), followed by Hebron (159 structures, 140 displaced people). The number of demolished structures represents a higher level than the corresponding time period last year. As a comparison, 2020 saw 854 demolished structures and 1,001 displaced people.²²

The increase in demolitions is highly concerning and represents one of the most acute and damaging IHL violations of the occupying power. For Palestinian women, home demolitions are particularly detrimental. Due to traditional patriarchal structures, the home is most often seen as the women's sphere, and they are often expected to continue caring for the family's practical and emotional needs with or without shelter. Mothers are left to care for their children and heal the trauma incurred by having their homes destroyed. It is also common for displaced families to move in with relatives on the husband's side, which often leads to a decrease of women's decision-making power and agency. Women supported by WCLAC have described that the little authority that they previously had is stripped away as they move in with in-laws.²³

As for the types of demolitions, there are three main categories of demolition orders that have been used in the West-Bank and East-Jerusalem, starting with ***punitive demolitions*** where houses are demolished as retaliation for the actions of people associated with the house. This practice only applies to Palestinians in the occupied territory. This type of demolition adversely affects other members of the household, making it a collective punishment prohibited under international humanitarian law.

Secondly, ***administrative demolitions*** where houses are demolished for lack of Israeli issued building permits, which are extremely difficult for Palestinians to obtain²⁴. This happens mostly in Area C and in East Jerusalem as a result of Israel's restrictive planning and permit regime²⁵. Finally, ***land-clearing operations/military demolitions*** are when houses are demolished by the Israeli military occupation forces during military operations for the purposes of clearing off a piece of land. The law of occupation prohibits destruction and demolition unless necessary for military operations²⁶. In Area C, new military orders enable Israeli authorities to circumvent procedures

²⁰ <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>

²¹

²² <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition>

²³ CARE-OCHA: Rapid Gender Analysis to inform the 2021 Humanitarian Programme Cycle in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, September 2020.

²⁴ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/most-palestinian-plans-build-area-c-not-approved>

²⁵ https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/alhaq_files/publications/SettlingAreaCTheJordanValleyExposed.pdf

²⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/amnesty-international-report-202021-state-worlds-human-rights-enarru>

and execute demolitions or confiscation of assets without (or with very short) prior notice. The lack of proper notice limits households' ability to seek legal support and challenge the order²⁷. Military demolitions account for the majority of defined demolitions, leaving most affected Palestinians homeless as a result.

Increase of settler violence

Violence carried out by Israeli settlers is most often ideologically motivated, and according to UN experts aims at intimidating and terrorizing Palestinians, as well as taking over Palestinian land. The violence targets Palestinian property, homes and agricultural land or livestock, and also includes direct and violent attacks on people.²⁸ Already in the beginning of the year, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland, noted that there had been an increase in settler violence.²⁹ The level of violence has continued to be particularly high throughout the reporting period. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that in the first 10 months of 2021, there have been 410 attacks by settlers against Palestinians (302 against property and 108 against individuals). Four Palestinians were killed by settlers this year. In 2020, there was a total of 358 recorded attacks. In 2019, there were 335 such attacks.³⁰

These settler attacks are primarily directed against rural Palestinian families living on small farms or in villages and towns in the occupied West Bank located in close proximity to Israeli settlements. Many of these Palestinians reside in the so-called "Area C" of the West Bank, which is under complete Israeli security and civil control, and where Israel's de facto annexation stratagem is most evident.

It should be mentioned that the settler violence has taken many forms, including physical violence, shooting with live ammunition, torching of fields and livestock, theft and vandalism of property, trees and crops, stone-throwing and tenacious intimidation of herders and their families.

Settler attacks often have a deep impact on families and on children in particular, as can be seen in a case where a Palestinian family in Hebron was attacked by ten Israeli settlers in March 2021. The two parents needed to be treated in a medical facility following the attack, and their eight children were left traumatized. Attacks have also specifically targeted young children, older persons or pregnant women, according to UN human rights experts.³¹

This means that women are often particularly vulnerable to settler attacks, particularly when pregnant. They are also impacted as the persons primarily responsible for caring for traumatized children after attacks. UN human rights experts stated earlier this year that:

"The pattern of attacks, particularly by violent and ideologically motivated settlers consistently confirms that the boundaries of attacks on all categories of Palestinians is being erased."³²

27 <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/peak-demolitions-and-confiscations-amidst-increasing-denial-right-justice>

28 OHCHR, 'Israel/OPT: UN experts warn of rising levels of Israeli settler violence in a climate of impunity', available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26991&LangID=E> accessed 17 July 2021a.

29 UNSCO (2021b).

30 OCHA, 'Protection of Civilians Report 21 December – 10 January 2022', available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/21-december-2021-10-january-2022>

31 OHCHR, 'UN experts warn of rising levels of Israeli settler violence in a climate of impunity', available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26991&LangID=E> accessed 17 July 2021b.

32 Ibid.

This could signify that women and other vulnerable groups could find themselves increasingly targeted by settlers, if this alarming development continues.

Digital Rights Violations Against Palestinians

In May 2021, when the clashes started in all the cities of historical Palestine the Israeli authorities proposed a law to install facial recognition cameras in public places and streets. This proposal would enable several Israeli security agencies other than the police to obtain the information collected by the cameras. This bill has sparked controversy in Israeli circles because of its repercussions on the right to privacy in Israeli society. Notwithstanding, Israeli authorities deploy this type of camera in oPt without any hindrance or protest against the violation of Palestinians' right to safety and privacy.³³

Similarly, the Israeli police pushed a plan to increase the number of cameras in coastal cities and Jerusalem under the pretext of fighting crime. In fact, this tactic entails many risks, including collecting, storing, and using biometric data about Palestinians to perpetuate racist and oppressive practices against Palestinians.³⁴ However, in July, the Israeli Cyber Authority- "*Israel National Cyber Directorate*" warned against using facial recognition cameras to maintain public order in places like stadiums or demonstrations. It asserted that this usage "could lead to excessive collection of facial pictures of people in a way that is liable to be used for surveilling them, documenting their movement and documenting their political positions – thus violating privacy, diminishing a person's sense of liberty and freedom of expression because of the chilling effect of this type of surveillance."³⁵

Yet according to the Washington Post, it has been revealed that Israeli occupation authorities have expanded the surveillance technologies they use against Palestinians in oPt in the past two years by integrating facial recognition technologies with a growing network of cameras and smartphones, which partially include a smartphone technology called 'Blue Wolf'. This technology takes pictures of the faces

of Palestinians and matches them with a large-scale image database. These technologies can classify Palestinians as they pass through the Israeli military checkpoints in terms of "danger" to Israeli occupation soldiers³⁶. In addition, according to Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media -7amleh's recent report "*Hashtag*" the settlers use the White Wolf software (an older technology) to scan Palestinians' ID cards and faces before entering settlements.³⁷

As for the gendered impact of the digital surveillance on Jerusalemites, according to 7amleh the proliferation of CCTV cameras across East Jerusalem has significantly impacted Palestinian Jerusalemites' sense of privacy. Cameras affixed often look directly into the windows of Palestinian homes. The increase of CCTV monitoring erodes all citizens' sense of comfort and dignity even in inside their home, where one expects to feel most secure. Researchers found this was even more pronounced for women, for whom home is no longer a sanctuary. In the report one of the women from Sheikh Jarrah explained that she has the sense of someone watching her, thus she has no sense of privacy at any time. "*I often sleep in my hijab; I have no privacy,*" she explained, "*The house is supposed to be the only place you feel at home, but I do not feel at home.*" Another woman said, "*I am*

33 <https://short.arab48.com/short/6mNR>

34 Israeli Police to Boost Number of Security Cameras in Two Mixed Arab-Jewish Cities." Haaretz. October 2021. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-israeli-police-to-boost-number-of-security-cameras-in-two-mixed-arab-jewish-cities-1.10322671>

35 Israeli Cyber Authority Opposes Police Plan to Install Face Recognition Cameras." Haaretz. August 2021. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-top-israeli-cyber-authority-opposes-police-plan-to-install-face-recognition-cameras-1.10073304?lts=1644406291691>

36 "Israel escalates surveillance of Palestinians with facial recognition program in West Bank." The Washington Post. November 8, 2021.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/israel-palestinians-surveillance-facial-recognition/2021/11/05/3787bf42-26b2-11ec-8739-5cb6a-ba30a30_story.html

37 <https://ifex.org/surveillance-censorship-and-violations-the-state-of-palestinian-digital-rights-in-2021/>

just scared someone can see me or will break into my home at any minute.”³⁸

The report also states that even though Israel maintains a comprehensive legislation to protect the right to privacy. Yet Palestinian Jerusalemites continue to be systematically denied such rights. Instead, Israeli authorities implement and carry out security measures opaquely, without consultation or communication with those communities subject to intensive surveillance.

In the same context, 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, published a report in June 15th on the *“Index of Racism and Incitement: An increase in racism and incitement against Palestinians & Arabs during the last Israeli Aggression”*, in which it indicated the extent of the spread of inflammatory and racist rhetoric and hate speech directed against Palestinians in the digital space. The report pointed out that the level of incitement in the digital space in the Hebrew language increased by 15 times during the aggression on the Gaza Strip during May 2021, compared to the same time period in 2020.³⁹

Attack on Palestinian Civil Society

On July 7th, Israeli Occupying Forces detained 10 Palestinian activists including Dr. Shatha Odeh Director of the Health Work Committees (HWC) and a prominent healthcare expert. This arrest comes with growing violations of Palestinian rights that included an Israeli occupation raid on the organization on 9 June 2021, confiscating its computers and closing it for 6 months for “security reasons”⁴⁰, putting into jeopardy the delivery of health care in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). It is worth noting that HWC runs 34 health centers across the OPT and employs approximately 200 full-time staff and provides healthcare to 15% of all patients in the West Bank.

HWC is not only a provider of health care but is also a critic of the privatization of health in the OPT, which has been facilitated by the occupation. As the OPT’s public health system is obstructed by the occupation and inability to access enough resources, and is pressured by neoliberal reforms, it cannot provide care to all those who need it. According to HWC’s research *“Facts related to the Right to Equitable Access to Health and Confronting the Privatization of Arab Health Systems”*, the role of for-profit health institutions has grown, further complicating access for the poor and increasing the importance of the few non-profit providers.⁴¹

Moreover, October 19th, Israel issued a military order declaring six leading Palestinian human rights and civil society groups as “terrorist organizations” under Israel’s domestic Counter-Terrorism (Anti-Terror) Law (2016), which authorizes Israeli authorities to close their offices, seize their assets and arrest and jail their staff members, and it prohibits funding or even publicly expressing support for their activities.⁴²

The six groups are Addameer, Al-Haq, Bisan Center for Research and Development, Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P), the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), and the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees (UPWC). The Israeli military commander also outlawed all six groups under the 1945 Emergency (Defense) Regulations, declaring them “unlawful associations”. The Palestinian civil society considered this act as a blatant political decision aimed at destroying Palestinian civil society, based on arbitrary law and emergency measures.

Humanitarian experts consider that the legislation is designed for a specific and restricted purpose, and must not be used to unjustifiably undermine civil liberties or to curtail the legitimate work of human rights organizations.

38 The Expansion of Digital Surveillance in Jerusalem and Impact on Palestinians Rights https://7amleh.org//storage/Digital%20Surveillance%20Jerusalem_7.11.pdf

39 <https://7amleh.org/2021/06/15/index-of-racism-and-incitement-an-increase-in-racism-and-incitement-against-palestinians-and-arabs-during-the-last-israeli-aggression>

40 <https://www.change.org/p/united-nations-human-rights-council-free-shatha-odeh-%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D8%B4%D8%B0%D9%89-%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%87?redirect=false>

41 <https://www.rosalux.ps/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ROSA-HWC-RESEARCH-JAN-22.pdf>

42 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/22/israel/palestine-designation-palestinian-rights-groups-terrorists>

It should be mentioned that the decision has already been condemned by the OHCHR⁴³ and other UN representatives, as well as by well-known international human rights organizations⁴⁴, which consider it an attempt to criminalize and delegitimize human rights work. Nevertheless, a group of 235 regional and international organizations, expressed their full solidarity with Palestinian civil society and human rights defenders. They expressed Israel attempts to silence human rights organizations critical exposure of its apartheid regime against Palestinians.⁴⁵

Palestinian Women detainees

By the end of Year 2021, Addameer states that out of 4,600 of Palestinian political prisoners, 34 Palestinian women are still held in Israeli prisons. 11 of them are mothers unjustly held in Israeli prisons under harsh conditions away from their families and children.

While Israel justifies the presence of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention centers by labeling them as “security prisoners”, the reality is that they are political prisoners, and often held without a charge or fair trial. Notably, Israel continues targeting women political leaders, University students, academics, journalists, human rights defenders, which is in clear violation of humanitarian law; namely the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of conflict. Israel consistently resorts to incarceration as a tactic of political control concordant to its intent to instate an institutionalized colonial regime of oppression and domination, preventing the possibility of putting an end to the occupation. Israel usually transfers Palestinian women detainees to Hasharon and Damon prisons, which lack a gender-sensitive approach and, as such, women detainees are prevented from their basic rights, and suffer from ill-treatment, medical negligence, solitary confinement, lack of personal health hygiene needs, denial of family visits, inadequate cells often filled with dirt and insects. At the same time, pregnant women suffer from these harsh conditions as well.

An ex-pregnant detainee, Anhar Al-Deek, 25 years old on August 25th has been experiencing difficult overall psychological and physical situation this was explained in the letter she has sent to her family appealing to human rights defenders to take up her case. “What shall I do if I give birth while I’m away from you (her family)?” al-Deek wrote. “I am handcuffed and you know how a caesarean operation [is difficult] outside the prison. How will I go through this experience while I’m in prison and alone?” Al-Deek said prison authorities will hold her in solitary confinement after she gives birth.⁴⁶ As a result on Friday August 27th, the mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in Geneva has sent an urgent appeal to request the international community to move to release Al-Deek.⁴⁷

On August 30th the Palestinian Feminist Movement and organisations sent an appeal to United Nations Special Procedures for the Immediate Release of Detainee Ms. Anhar Al-Deek for the attention of: The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territory Occupied since 1967, Mr. S. Michael Lynk; The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Ms. Elina Steinerte (Chair-Rapporteur); The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Ms. Reem AlSalem; The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health, Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng; The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Ms. E. Tendayi Achiume.

43 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27702&LangID=E>

44 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/22/israel/palestine-designation-palestinian-rights-groups-terrorists>

45 <https://ifex.org/israels-designation-of-six-palestinian-human-rights-groups-as-terrorist-organizations-an-internationally-wrongful-act/>

46 <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/pregnant-palestinian-woman-jailed-by-israel-appeals-for-her-release/2345847>

47 <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/125888>

It should be mentioned that the Israeli Ofer Military court ruled on Thursday September 2nd to conditionally release Anhar Al-Deek as she is nine months pregnant on a financial bail of 40,000 shekels (\$12,500) while also putting her under house arrest in her family's home in the town of Kafr Ni'ma (west of Ramallah) based on this decision, Anhar's mother Aisha will become responsible of maintaining her house arrest and will become the "prison guard" of her daughter. Nevertheless, during her tie in prison her overall psychological and physical situation has worsened as a result of the beating, long investigation period, all whilst pregnant and she barely received the needed treatment and care.

According to WAFA (Palestinian official News Agency), During the long years of the Israeli occupation, dozens of Palestinian pregnant women were arrested. Some were released before delivery, some lost their babies or underwent induced abortions, and some were forced to deliver in prison. Eight former Palestinian prisoners gave birth to their children inside the occupation prisons. Prisoners in labor go through delivery pains for hours before being taken to the hospital. They give birth shackled, handcuffed and heavily guarded forced to deal with humiliation before returning immediately to prison. Yet, the occupation does not allow new mothers to keep their infants with them for more than two years.

On September 26th, Palestinian political and civil society leader Khalida Jarrar, 58, has been released after close to two years in Israeli prisons. The Israeli army arrested Jarrar from her home in Ramallah on October 31, 2019, eight months after she was released following 20 months in administrative detention without trial or charge.

In July, one of Jarrar's two daughters, 31-year-old Suha, died in Ramallah after health complications, leading to mass calls for Israel to release the politician early to attend her daughter's funeral, which Israel rejected.

"They forbade me from participating in the funeral of my beloved daughter and from planting a kiss on my daughter's forehead," Jarrar said at the cemetery after her release her release after three months of her daughter's death. She added before breaking down in tears "They denied me her farewell, the last time I hugged Suha was the night of my arrest in 2019."⁴⁸

Moreover, tensions escalated on December 14th in the northern Damon prison, where three female prisoners and representatives of the other inmates refused to leave their cell during an evening raid due to the cold weather outside⁴⁹. Nevertheless, the Israeli officers then cut off electricity in their section, beat them and transferred one of the prisoners, Shurooq Dwayyat, into isolation. Yet, the other two prisoners, Marah Bakir and Muna Qaadan, were placed in solitary confinement the next day after they protested by beating on the cell doors.⁵⁰ Their rooms were also raided, and the three female prisoners refused their meals until they were all returned to their cells. During the raids, a number of other women were beaten by Israeli special forces.

48 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/26/palestinian-mp-khalida-jarrar-released-from-israeli-prison>

49 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/30/tensions-boil-as-palestinian-prisoners-face-collective-punishment>

50 <https://www.addameer.org/ar/news/4639>

The Blockade against the Gaza Strip

Alongside other developments, the illegal blockade against the Gaza Strip continues to impact the lives of Palestinian women and their ability to exercise their fundamental rights. The blockade, which has now been in place for 14 years, has led to one of the world's most severe man-made humanitarian crises. Lacking control of its borders, imports and exports, the Gaza Strip suffers from an acute lack of resources, including health equipment, medications and food which has been particularly detrimental during the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, environmental degradation, widespread economic hardship and among the highest population densities in the world, makes the situation all the more difficult for the Gazan population. Women suffer disproportionately from the effects of the blockade, as these are compounded with patriarchal structures. Women also care the often-overwhelming burden of caring for children and elderly relatives despite lack of resources.

It has been particularly noticeable that the economic hardship among women in Gaza has deepened significantly. The blockade and associated humanitarian crisis make it particularly difficult for Gaza to lift itself out of the economic crisis that has followed in the wake of COVID-19. For women, this has been further multiplied by entrenched social structures and lack of support for working women. The unemployment rate among labour force participants in Palestine reached 26% in 2021, and the total labour underutilization reached 34%.

There is still a large disparity in the unemployment rate between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as this rate reached 47% in Gaza Strip compared to 16% in the West Bank. On the gender level, the unemployment rate for females reached 43% compared to 22% for males in Palestine.⁵¹ The situation in the Gaza Strip was soon to become even more difficult as hostilities and Israeli military aggressions began to escalate.

What about the Israeli military raid/war on the Gaza Strip in May 2021 which has further exacerbated the human rights situation and the sufferings of all Palestinian civilians especially women and children. The military aggression on Gaza has caused high casualties among women and children and wiped out whole families with the indiscriminate bombardment of residential areas, targeting civilian objects and civilian property.... etc.

According to an Analysis published by UN Women on June 23rd *"Gender and Wars in Gaza Untangled: What Past Wars Have Taught Us?"*, before the latest escalation, the Gaza Strip was in a protracted humanitarian crisis due to the Israeli blockade, successive rounds of conflict, ongoing internal Palestinian political division and the outbreak of COVID-19 which have all compounded the dire humanitarian situation. Unemployment, food insecurity, electricity blackouts, sanitation disasters, and large-scale casualties of participants in the "Great March of Return and the Breaking of the Siege" (GMR) have increased poverty and overwhelmed social services. Of a total population of 2.1 million people, 71 per cent, or 1.5 million, are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance. Only ten per cent of households have "direct access to safe drinking water". Fifty-three per cent of Palestinians in Gaza are living below poverty line, more than three times the number in the West Bank. These pressures have been linked to an increase in gender-based violence (GBV), school dropouts, child and forced marriage and early high-risk pregnancies, while shelters and other service providers struggle to meet the needs with increasingly limited resources. Gender inequalities were already aggravated by COVID-19 pandemic as early UN Women's assessment of the impact of COVID-19 in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) also showed an increase in GBV incidence. It also highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on women's livelihood, particularly those working in the informal sector with no work or income protection.⁵²

51 <https://pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4177#:~:text=The%20unemployment%20rate%20among%20labour,16%25%20in%20the%20West%20Bank.>

52 <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20palestine/attachments/publications/2021/06/d8-rga%20brief-compressed%203.pdf?la=en&vs=851>

Israeli Military Aggression on the Gaza Strip

Following rockets fired on May 10th from the Gaza Strip toward Jerusalem, in response to the severe violations that had taken place, particularly the police and military violence at the compound of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Israel responded through a brutal series of air, land and sea strikes toward the Gaza Strip. Israel launched a military aggression on the Gaza Strip on the same day for 11 consecutive days resulting in casualties among the Palestinian civilian population and the destruction of private civilian property in grave breaches of international humanitarian law, namely the IVth Geneva Convention.

In Gaza, the humanitarian consequences of the Israeli strikes have been devastating. Israeli airstrikes have hit various targets, including high-rise skyscrapers, schools, and hospitals, as well as the al-Shati refugee camp. By May 17th, the UN estimated that Israeli airstrikes had damaged 94 buildings in Gaza, containing 461 residential and commercial units, including the al-Jalaa Highrise, as well as 60 apartment buildings.⁵³ It is also highly alarming that while the aggressions were being carried out, the United States approved an agreement to sell precision-guided weapons for 735 million USD to Israel.⁵⁴

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, protests, violent clashes and arrests also increased significantly during this time period resulting in casualties and severe property damage. In historical Palestine intra-communal violence increased in several towns, including Lod, Haifa and Nazareth. Amnesty International has described how Israeli police targeted Palestinians in these areas through unlawful and discriminatory use of force, arrests and torture. Israeli police have also repeatedly neglected to protect Palestinians from organized and well-publicized attacks by armed Jewish supremacist groups. Likewise, the vast majority of these attackers have not been held accountable for violence that was carried out toward Palestinians and their property.⁵⁵

During these events, there was a successful campaign and social movement on social media led by Palestinian youth activists, which had great impact on the international public opinion. The Palestinian discourse was mainstreamed throughout international social media, as the term of Israel as “apartheid state” was put in light in the mainstream discourse on the Israeli Palestinian issue. This was a major breakthrough for the Palestinian cause.

Palestinian women have suffered immensely from this resurgence of violence and aggressions. Women in Gaza have had to deal with schools, hospitals and homes being attacked in Israeli strikes and with hundreds of casualties. In the West Bank including East Jerusalem, violence has also led to casualties, fear and the destruction of essential structures. As described above, women bear a particular burden in healing families’ trauma from IHL violations, attacks and other violent consequences of the occupation.

This year’s resurgence of aggressions has brought this need to a new level. Children, particularly in Gaza, have been left severely traumatized from repeated strikes, deaths and injuries, and the destruction of their neighbourhoods. Palestinian women have thus had to deal with their own fear and sorrow, care for their traumatized children, while also rebuilding lives that have been shaken to the core. Between May 10th and May 21st, it is estimated that 243 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, including over 100 women and children. In Israel, 12 people were killed during the hostilities.⁵⁶

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54 Patricia Zengerle, ‘Biden administration approved \$735 million arms sale to Israel - sources’, available at: {<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/biden-administration-approved-735-million-arms-sale-israel-sources-2021-05-17/>} accessed 17 July 2021.

55 Amnesty, ‘Pattern of discriminatory Israeli police violations against Palestinians’, available at: {<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/israeli-police-targeted-palestinians-with-discriminatory-arrests-torture-and-unlawful-force/>} accessed 17 July 2021.

56 BBC News, ‘Israel-Gaza ceasefire holds despite Jerusalem clash’, available at: {<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57195537>} accessed 17 July 2021.

Ceasefire and Devastation Aftermath

On May 21st, after 11 days of violent and disproportionate military attacks on Gaza, a ceasefire was brokered bringing the aggressions to a halt. However, the humanitarian crisis following in its wake was only just beginning. The UN and other humanitarian organizations have warned of the severe impact that the hostilities have had, particularly compounded with the already strained socio-economic conditions.⁵⁷ Israeli airstrikes have demolished important infrastructure, and the import restrictions imposed by Israel have led to inadequate access to fuel, food, water, and medication to the Gaza Strip. The violence also impeded humanitarian groups and employees from reaching the people in greatest need.

By the time the ceasefire was brokered, the attacks had led to over 230 buildings including over 991 dwelling and commercial units being demolished, with hundreds more seriously damaged according to Gaza's Ministry of Public Works and Housing. In the week prior to the ceasefire, more than 72,000 individuals had been displaced, with over 56,000 of them seeking refuge in UNRWA schools.⁵⁸

Some individuals who started to return to their homes came back to damaged portions of Gaza's water and sanitation facilities, breaking off running water to residential buildings.⁵⁹ The import of fuel to power these facilities, was also restricted. According to OCHA, almost 800,000 people do not have ready access to safe piped water.⁶⁰

Energy in Gaza is generally limited, with rolling blackouts on a daily basis. Upon the cessation of hostilities, electrical power was only available for a few hours every day.⁶¹ Hospitals, which rely on generators for incubators, operations, and the treatment of injured patients, were also hit by the shortages. This put an even further strain on the health-care system already stressed by the pandemic, which now has had to deal with COVID-19 as well as war-related traumas. The unrest prompted displaced families to seek refuge in overcrowded shelters, coupled with an interrupted vaccination campaign in Gaza, and has raised concerns of another peak in COVID-19 cases.

III. Violence escalates

In April, several events and IHL violations led to an escalation of tension and violence, particularly in Jerusalem. With the beginning of Ramadan, Israeli authorities denied Palestinians' access to the important gathering spot Damascus Gate Plaza in East Jerusalem by erecting barriers around the area. Access to Al-Aqsa Mosque was also restricted, making it difficult or impossible for countless Palestinians to reach this holy site for the first Friday of Ramadan. This sparked outrage and protests across the Palestinian community, and tensions continued to escalate. Shortly after, Israeli soldiers entered the compound of the Al-Aqsa Mosque using tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades aimed at Palestinian worshippers. The same week, Israeli ultra-nationalists marched through Jerusalem chanting threatening messages and leading to violent confrontations between the extremist groups and Palestinians around Damascus gate.⁶²

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58 Nidal Al-mughrabi, 'In Gaza, U.N. classrooms become dormitories as Palestinians flee conflict', available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/gaza-un-classrooms-become-dormitories-palestinians-flee-conflict-2021-05-18/> accessed 13 July 2021.

59 Iyad Abuheweila, Adam Rasgon, Isabel Kershner, and Marc Santora, 'Gaza War Deepens a Long-Running Humanitarian Crisis', available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/18/world/middleeast/gaza-israel.html> accessed 13 July 2021.

60 xx

61 Haaretz, 'Gazans have been left without shelter, electricity or jobs – and the road to reconstruction is long', available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/.premium-gazans-are-left-without-shelter-or-jobs-and-reconstruction-is-a-long-way-off-1.9850984> accessed 13 July 2021.

62 <https://apidiakoniasse.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/05/Timeline-hostilities-israel-palestine-may-2021-1.pdf>: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/10/dozens-injured-in-clashes-over-israeli-settlements-ahead-of-jerusalem-day-march>

Settlements in East Jerusalem

In tandem with these alarming developments, approximately 1,000 Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan of East Jerusalem have faced threats of mass expulsion from their family homes. The eviction of hundreds of Palestinian residents from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah had been ordered by the Jerusalem District Court earlier in the year.⁶³ On November 2nd, four Palestinian families facing forced displacement in Sheikh Jarrah unanimously rejected an Israeli court's proposal, which suggested that the Palestinian families could stay in their homes for at least 15 years as protected tenants, only if they acknowledged that the settlers were the true owners⁶⁴ and pay an annual fee of 1,500 NIS to the Nahalat Shimon company.⁶⁵

It should be mentioned that Nahalat Shimon International, is a private settler company registered in the United States, has been driving eviction lawsuits against families in the Karm Al-Jaouni area of Sheikh Jarrah since 2008. Nahalat Shimon has submitted plans to build a new settlement with some 200 housing units in the area.⁶⁶

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s Report "Protection of Civilians", at least 970 Palestinians, including 424 children, are at risk of forced expulsion in East Jerusalem due to cases brought before Israeli courts, primarily by Jewish settler groups, with support from the Israeli government.⁶⁷

The case of Sheikh Jarrah, according to a UN special rapporteur report, "has become emblematic of the threats of forced displacement facing many Palestinian families in East Jerusalem with the aim of establishing a Jewish majority in the city and creating irreversible demographic facts on the ground".⁶⁸

In Silwan, 14 families were evacuated and replaced by settlers, and another 84 families continued to fight in court for their right to their family homes.⁶⁹ In the end of May, the court decision on the evictions in Silwan was postponed, awaiting the Israeli Supreme Court.⁷⁰ On June 7th, however, the Jerusalem municipality ordered a series of evacuations and self-demolitions in the al-Bustan area of Silwan. On June 29th, Israeli forces began the demolition of buildings in al-Bustan, beginning with Palestinian shops and businesses. The Israeli forces used teargas and rubber bullets against Palestinian protesters who were trying to protect their homes and livelihoods, and at least four people were injured in violent confrontations.⁷¹

On November 24th, about 84 Palestinian homes in the Wadi Yasoul neighbourhood of Silwan in occupied East Jerusalem are facing demolition to make way for enlarging an Israeli national park - City of David theme park in the area. Some 600 Palestinians living there will be rendered homeless if an Israeli court rules in favour of the demolition.⁷²

The conflict concerning these homes dates back as far as 1948 when the 28 Palestinian families concerned were displaced from their homes during the Arab-Israeli War, and were resettled in

63 UNSCO, 'BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (24 June 2021)', available at: {https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security_council_briefing_-_24_june_2021_0.pdf} accessed 23 March 2021d.

64 <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-palestinian-residents-reject-israeli-court-s-compromise-on-sheikh-jarrah-1.10346999>

65 <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-sheikh-jarrah-israel-court-verdict-palestinians-unhappy-7436901/>

66 <https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2021/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-evictions-in-east-jerusalem/>

67 <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/protection-civilians-report-7-20-december-2021>

68 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26648&LangID=E>

69 Peace Now, 'Systematic dispossession of Palestinian communities in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan', available at: {<https://peacenow.org.il/en/systematic-dispossession-palestinian-communities-sheikh-jarrah-silwan>} accessed 17 July 2021.

70 Times of Israel, 'Court pushes off ruling on evictions of Palestinian families in Silwan', available at: {<https://www.timesofisrael.com/court-pushes-off-ruling-on-evictions-of-palestinian-families-in-silwan/>} accessed 17 July 2021.

71 Al Jazeera, 'Demolitions begin in occupied East Jerusalem's Silwan', available at: {<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/29/demolitions-begin-in-occupied-east-jerusalems-silwan>} accessed 17 July 2021.

72 <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/11/24/silwan>

1956, after which they have resided in their homes.⁷³ However, Israeli law allows Israeli settler to pursue claims on this land in East Jerusalem, due to the fact that the Palestinian families were displaced during the war. The longstanding conflict has reached its peak now in 2021, with court rulings and planned evictions. Violent clashes and harassment of the Palestinian residents has also ensued. Israeli forces have placed barriers around the area, heavily restricting the access to this part of Sheikh Jarrah. Israeli police have also carried out extensive skunk spraying of Sheikh Jarrah's Palestinian houses, stores, restaurants, public areas, and cultural institutions. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has called on Israel to stop all forced evictions of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah, arguing that such expulsions would violate Israel's responsibilities under international law.⁷⁴

A New Precedent: HRC International Commission of Inquiry to Investigate Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel

On May 27th, The Human Right Council (HRC) opened its 30th Special Session on "the grave human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem". The HRC discerned calls from speakers from NGOs and states to establish an international, independent Commission of Inquiry (Col) to investigate in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021. The mandate of the Col is considered a precedent as the investigation has jurisdiction over the opt including Gaza strip, East Jerusalem and 48 occupied lands, as well as it is open and not limited to a time framework.

Throughout the 30th Special session, a list of speakers including states and NGOs representatives urged the Council to include the crime against humanity and Israeli apartheid regime in its investigations, take decisive actions towards ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including through dispatching a Commission of Inquiry. In addition, urging the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, speakers condemned Israel's continued attacks against the Gaza Strip, and urged the international community to put an end to the massacres committed by Israel. They also called that the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected and upheld the right to worship. All acts of aggression and incitement by the occupying power, as well as its attempts at changing the demography, character and legal status of the occupied Palestinian territory must stop. The establishment of an international independent Commission of Inquiry is necessary and would contribute to putting an end to impunity. In addition, speakers expressed deep concern about the acceleration of the Israeli settlement policy and the imminent threat of eviction of hundreds of Palestinian families from their homes in occupied East Jerusalem, speakers demanded the immediate end of all such illegal policies and practices that were in violation of Israel's obligations under international law. Speakers also stressed the importance of maintaining the truce and delivering humanitarian assistance to affected populations.

In June 2021, WCLAC's participated with an oral intervention in the 30th special session of the Human Rights Council. The intervention was presented by Noor Swirki, a woman journalist from Gaza who have been coached by WCLAC to her story. As a result, Noor presented her testimony as a right holder amid Israel's aggression on Gaza and highlighted the gendered impact of the Israeli military offensive and Israel's apartheid regime on women, particularly women living in the Gaza strip.

⁷³ Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre, 'TIMELINE - From displacement and dispossession in Sheikh Jarrah to hostilities', available at: [https://api.diakonia-se/cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/05/Timeline-hostilities-israel-palestine-may-2021-1.pdf](https://api.diakonia.se/cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/05/Timeline-hostilities-israel-palestine-may-2021-1.pdf) accessed 17 July 2021.

⁷⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27067&LangID=E>

Following the special session, the Human Rights Council passed a resolution in favor of establishing a commission of inquiry in the oPt to investigate in all Israel's IHL and IHRL violations, including underlying root causes of the situation, and Israel's settler colonialism and apartheid regime over Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line.

On May 31st, WCLAC submitted a joint Written Statement to the Human Rights Council, addressing the gendered impact of the latest escalation of Israel's IHL violations on Palestinian women and girls, through lived testimonies from women in Sheikh Jarrah and Gaza. Through the submitted statement, WCLAC urged the Council to take immediate measures abiding by its legal and moral obligations to protect the Palestinian people as a whole. Hence, WCLAC reiterated on the Council's members to support and facilitate the Commission of Inquiry to investigate in all Israel's violations against the Palestinian people as a whole. Highlighting the urgency to adopt a gender-responsive approach in all deliberations about the occupied Palestinian territories in order to explicitly address the gendered impacts of the occupation in all relevant resolutions, with special attention to the promotion and protection of human rights of Palestinian women and girls, and take measures to address the repercussions of occupation.

IV. Gender-based violence, femicide and the harassment of human rights defenders

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis and the alarming escalation of hostilities and aggressions, Palestinian women have also continued to suffer from gender-based human rights violations. Most notably, these include the shadow pandemic of GBV, the heightened prevalence of femicide, and most recently the increased harassment of women human rights defenders (WHRDs). These are all examples of discrimination and violence that occur as a result of rigid patriarchal structures.

Gender-based violence

GBV has long been a primary human rights concern for Palestinian women. In 2019 Survey by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) it was estimated that that 29 per cent of ever-married Palestinian women had experienced some form of GBV during the twelve months before the survey. As is well-known by now, this has significantly increased during COVID-19. The Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs estimates that GBV has increased by 300 per cent since the beginning of the pandemic.⁷⁵ WCLAC has reported extensively on this rise of GBV and have supported hundreds of women throughout the crisis.

The increase of GBV is a result of several risk factors being exacerbated by the pandemic, including increased economic hardship and unemployment, enforced coexistence in small living quarters, inability to leave escalating or dangerous situations during lockdown, and a decrease in contact with social support networks, friends and family.

As the crisis wears on, the effects on society have developed and changed accordingly. This means that the risk factors identified above have slightly shifted, however the heightened risk of GBV remains. For instance, the initial shock and fears of COVID-19 that led to heightened tension within families may have lessened, however the economic hardship and unemployment has in fact increased over time. Likewise, lockdowns and school closures have become less common, but it seems that deepened gender roles and increase of women's unpaid labour remain unchanged. These deeper societal changes continue to impact the risk of GBV, as women find themselves in shifted power dynamics, with less bargaining power and at greater exposure to psychological and physical violence, inter alia. Moreover, it may in fact be more difficult to spot some of these effects, when the initial air of "crisis" wears off.

⁷⁵ UNSCO (2021a).

What is visible now in 2021, is that the initial shock of COVID-19 has given way to more long-term effects on family dynamics and the lives of women. There is a significant risk that these effects become less distinguishable over time, though they continue to impact women's safety and well-being as much as ever. It is therefore essential that WCLAC and other women's rights organizations continue to highlight the heightened challenges that Palestinian women continue to grapple with in terms of increased economic hardship, unemployment and deepened gender roles – all of which exacerbate the pre-existent risk of GBV.

Femicide

In 2021, WCLAC along with other women's rights organizations have also drawn specific attention to the alarming occurrence of femicide. Femicide is the intentional and gender-based murdering of women,⁷⁶ making it the most extreme and horrific expression of GBV and the violation of women's human rights. As outlined in a report submitted by WCLAC and the Palestinian NGO Forum to Combat Violence Against Women (Al-Muntada) to the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences Ms. Dubravka Šimonović in April of this year, cases of femicide seem to have increased in Palestine in recent years (see Figure 2 below).

WCLAC also issued an analytical report in Arabic on femicide in Palestinian society under the title "Femicide in the Time of Corona". In this report WCLAC analyzed the 58 cases (25 cases in Gaza and 33 cases in the West Bank) of femicide it documented during 2019 and 2020. Analysis of these cases show that 37% of them were single, 32% were married, 3% were engaged, 3% were widows and the rest we did not have enough information about their social status. Analysis of the cases also show that 27% of these murders were committed by the brother of the victim, 23% were committed by the husband, and the other 23% of the cases were also committed by the father, while the rest of the cases were committed by the others such as the stepfather, the brother in-law and others. Analysis of the cases showed that suicide cases during 2019- 2020, registered (11) cases, equivalent to (19%) of the total number of (58) cases, with no insufficient information, hence remained unclassified. While (13) cases were classified as suicide with a ratio of (22%), according to the information provided by the concerned authorities or by the family members of the victim. The remaining (34) cases with a percentage of approximately (59%) were confirmed as killing cases (femicide).

COVID had a great impact on women through a dramatic increase of GBV and femicide cases with 37 cases registered by WCLAC in 2020. During 2021 WCLAC recorded 18 women being killed in the West Bank and 19 in the Gaza Strip during these time periods. The risk of femicide is likely to have increased in parallel with the prevalence of GBV, and shares many associated risk factors during the pandemic.

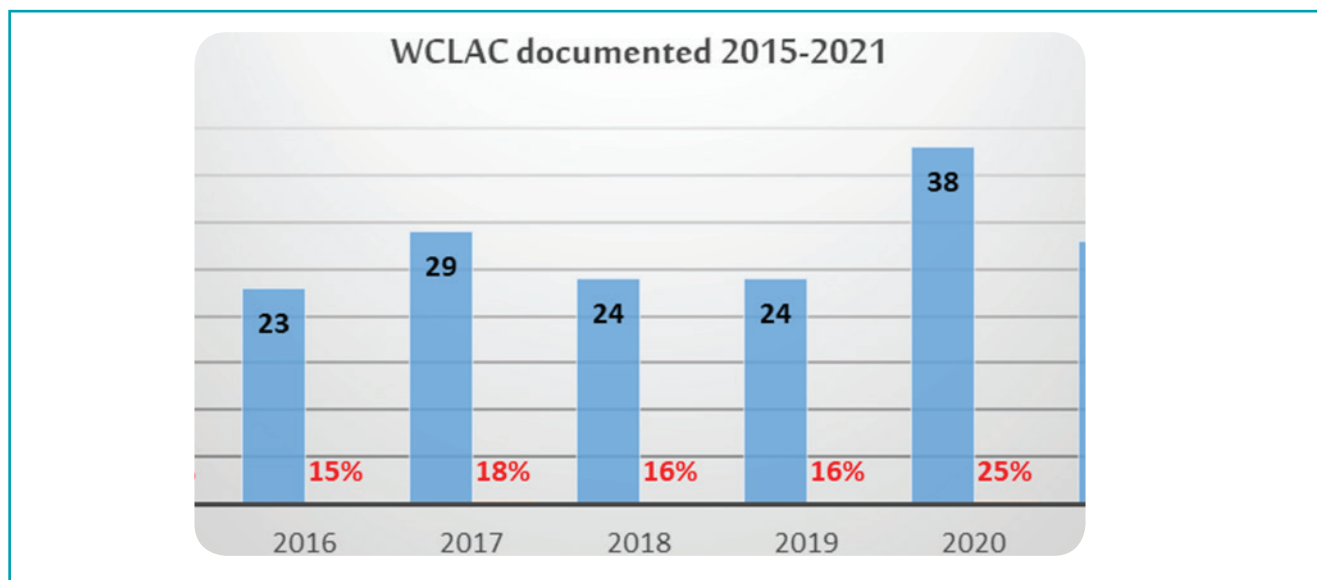
On November 22nd, Sabreen Yasser Khweira, a mother of four, was allegedly stabbed to death by her husband in a small Palestinian village on the outskirts of Ramallah. Khweira is the 26th Palestinian woman to be killed in a case of femicide so far in 2021 in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Ramallah-based Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC). At least 15 other Palestinian women have been killed inside Israel.

A draft of the Family Protection Bill has been stalled since at least 2016 but was not passed yet, while prevailing penal laws are outdated and do not adequately address crimes of femicide and/or GBV cases. The current legal system does not adequately address the prevalence of femicide and in fact often makes it more difficult for women at-risk to seek support and justice. Outdated and patriarchal penal laws, along with overlapping legislation makes the application of the law unclear and inaccessible. There are also several gaps in the legislation that prevent the prosecution of perpetrators. WCLAC has called for the drafting or approving of legislation that ensures justice

⁷⁶ WHO, "Understanding and addressing violence against women", available at: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf

and gender equality for Palestinian women, including the endorsement of the unified Palestinian Penal Code, the Personal Status Law, and the Family Protection Bill. In addition, the particular occurrence of femicide needs to be recognized and better understood from a gender-sensitive perspective, in order to address the root causes and protect women at-risk.⁷⁷

Figure 2. Cases of femicide crimes in Palestine: WCLAC figures



Targeting of Human Rights Defenders

On June 24th, the Palestinian activist and human rights defender Nizar Banat, died from injuries sustained when his home was stormed by soldiers and security officers from Palestinian Preventive and Intelligence forces. He was reportedly beaten severely and taken into custody, where he died just a few hours later.⁷⁸

The response to Nizar Banat's death was immediate, with large protests and demonstrations held, particularly in Ramallah. These protests have also been met with excessive force and violations of human rights, including the beating and arrests of protesters, sometimes by plain clothed officers.⁷⁹

Women have been targeted in particular ways during and after these protests. It is well-known that women human rights defenders (WHRDs) worldwide often face the intimidation and harassment of HRDs compounded with gender-based and sexist elements. They are often targeted in ways that exploit their particular vulnerabilities within a patriarchal system and also approach the private sphere of their lives rather than the public one.⁸⁰ The gendered dimension of Israeli harassment of Palestinian WHRDs has been observed previously.⁸¹ What has happened in Palestine these past weeks is another clear example of the gender-based harassment of WHRDs.

Women peaceful protesters as well as journalists covering the events, were harassed by Palestinian

⁷⁷ https://www.wclac.org/News/342/WCLAC_and_AIMuntada_Jointly_Issue_Report_on_Femicide_in_the_Palestinian_Society

⁷⁸ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/killing-nizar-banat-and-authoritarianism-palestine/>; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/palestine-investigation-into-death-in-custody-of-palestinian-activist-must-be-transparent-effective/>

⁷⁹ open Democracy, 'The killing of Nizar Banat and authoritarianism in Palestine', available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/killing-nizar-banat-and-authoritarianism-palestine/> accessed 17 July 2021.

⁸⁰ See e.g. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/women/wrgs/pages/hrdefenders.aspx>

⁸¹ UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF ISRAEL, 'PALESTINIAN WOMEN UNDER PROLONGED ISRAELI OCCUPATION - The Gendered Impact of Occupation Violence', available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Palestine-UPR_web-2-5.pdf accessed 17 July 2021.

security forces and persons in civilian clothes working with the security forces. Several women reported having their phones stolen by security officers during the demonstrations. Later on, these phones were used in order to publish private photographs of the women online.⁸² This is an attempted smear campaign against WHRDs that draws on patriarchal views of womanhood and modesty. The photographs were meant to paint the women in an unfavourable light, and discredit them. Although the women were participating in political activism in the public sphere, it was their personal information that was spread on social media as retaliation. This is clearly a targeted attempt to keep women in particular from participating in demonstrations and activism, as is their undeniable democratic right. It also draws on patriarchal norms in order to discourage women from voicing their opinions and for male family member to exert control over them in order to keep them from exercising democratic rights in future demonstrations.

Not only women protester, yet on another level, female Palestinian journalists have been also assaulted. The attacks on these journalists had two levels; the first is the direct physical violence in the streets; then comes the online attacks designed to incite people to exert social pressure on them as a way to silence them. On July 2nd the Middle East Eye published a feature on how the Palestinian Authority forces have violently assaulted women journalists reporting on protests in Ramallah on June 26th. The feature interviewed five female journalists who have been subjected to several attempts by security forces to prevent them from doing their job, and had to show their Palestinian Journalists Syndicate membership card each time, smear campaigns, violently attacked with a truncheon, and threatened with rape. The incidents indicate that Palestinian security forces are specifically targeting women journalists, as reflected in the escalating levels of hostility and violence towards them compared to their male counterparts. It should be mentioned that the attacks on women journalists have included physical violence, confiscation of electronic devices used to cover the events; intimidation and harassment; chasing journalists in the street; arrest attempts and a ban on reporting. The assaults have continued even after the protests were over, with many female journalists receiving veiled threats that they will be discredited and defamed.⁸³

As a result, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said in a statement on July 5th that at least 35 journalists have been targeted and condemned the targeted violence by Palestinian security forces against many journalists covering the protests against the murder of Nizar Banatt a well-known critic of Palestinian Authority President.⁸⁴ It should be mentioned that Palestine is ranked 132nd out of 180 countries in RSF's 2021 World Press Freedom Index.⁸⁵

Moreover, WCLAC submitted an urgent appeal on the recent violence against peaceful protestors and women journalists to the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association in August 2021. WCLAC highlighted the assaults that had occurred throughout the 4 days of protests, as there were no local efforts by any government officials or by the Palestinian Journalists Union were seen or heard. Also, WCLAC explained that the peak of events were seen with the arbitrary detentions of men and women indiscriminately (where they were also subjected to physical and sexual violence). In addition to the breach of the right to privacy and personal integrity, since members of the Palestinian Security Forces hacked the stolen phones of women and published private photos of them on Facebook and Instagram. They also sent them defamation threats, enforcing fear and psychological distress over them, as well as violating Article 19+18 +17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Finally, WCLAC requested the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association a set of recommendations, most importantly, take preventative measures and necessary further steps to protect women victims of gender-based violence in the Occupied

⁸² openDemocracy.

⁸³ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestine-women-journalists-speak-up-pa-attacks>

⁸⁴ <https://rsf.org/en/news/least-35-journalists-attacked-while-covering-west-bank-protests>

⁸⁵ <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

Palestinian Territories. Additionally, to investigate the recent violence by the PA security forces during the peaceful protest against the killing of Nizar Banat taking into account gender-specific approach. Adopt a gender-responsive approach in all deliberations about the occupied Palestinian territories to explicitly address the gendered impacts of the occupation and the PA security forces violence.

In her testimony to WCLAC, a young woman activist who was protesting in the peaceful demonstration said: "I was attacked by men in civilian clothing on Saturday 26th of June 2021, around 19:00 pm. It happened across from Grand Stores and right next to Ayyash Mall in Ramallah's Irsa' street. I was sitting on the sidewalk, trying to relief my breath from the immense amount of gas I inhaled. In front of me were lines of security forces blocking all exits of the street. Suddenly, a commander from the security forces shouts: "I will count to five and find you all gone". He addressed the 10 people left who were sitting on the sidewalk or simply observing the aftermath of the heavy gas bomb attacks. I asked him why he's threatening us, and if he's going to attack me for simply standing, I raised both my arms in the air and repeated that I have no weapons, I have nothing on me but my voice, and that one of their sticks could easily split my head open. A guy in civilian clothing who was wearing a white shirt if I remember well, started yelling at me up close, with almost 10 cm distance between us. He yelled at me like a monster. I suffer from generalized anxiety disorder, so his yelling instantly induced a panic episode in which my entire body was paralyzed and I couldn't move. Due to the traumatic experience, I cannot recall in detail the exact words, but they were something along the lines of threatening to beat me up if I don't leave, and that my presence is a disgrace, or something of the sort. He looked at me with what I can only describe as murderous looks.

Before processing his words, another man in (if I remember correctly) a blue shirt attacked my left arm with both his hands in attempt to steal my phone which I was holding in my left hand. I was not videotaping or taking pictures at the time. When I resisted the theft of my phone, he twisted my arm with a lot of force and pushed me to the ground with the help of the other man. They tried to take me but a paramedic interfered when people started yelling that I've been hit. My arm was hurting a lot. The pain and the trauma induced a panic attack. I was very dizzy, I couldn't walk, and I kept crying. Right then, a woman started taping and saying "Take out your phones and tape! They're scared of the cameras!". People helped me up and a paramedic wrapped my arm. I went to the hospital afterwards and found that I have contusions in my arm and the man's nail marks on my wrist.

Young women journalists were also targeted during these events and many of them beaten severely by security forces of persons in civilian clothes working with them while covering the events. This has caused serious panic and fear among young journalists who were discouraged from conducting their professional work in the following protests. In her testimony to WCLAC Journalist Fayhaa said; "a guy from the security forces dressed as a civilian, pushed me on the ground while I was running after another security member also dressed as a civilian took her phone, I fell on the ground unconscious, after my friend helped get up, we saw a police car in front of us, we tried to explain what has just happened but one of them simply told the other close the car window and don't talk to her".

VIII. Other political developments

There have been a number of other political developments during 2021 that also need to be

addressed, including the postponing of the Palestinian elections, an attempt to pass amendments on the Palestinian NGO and Charitable Organizations to further control work of civil society organizations, the swearing-in of a new Israeli government, a new ruling from the ICC, and the launch of a commission of inquiry by the Human Rights Council (HRC).

The Palestinian elections postponed

Palestinian elections had been planned to be held in May 2021, for the first time since 2006, bearing witness to a reconciliation between the two main Palestinian political factions and forming an important step for Palestinian democracy. The elections were planned to include all Palestinians, across the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The elections were however postponed in April of this year. The primary cited reason was that Palestinians in East Jerusalem would not be permitted to vote according to Israeli authorities. There were also political splits that may have impacted the decision to postpone.⁸⁶ The postponing of the election is highly unfortunate as it prevents Palestinians from exercising their democratic rights. For many women, who have a more difficult time engaging in activism and day-to-day politics within a patriarchal society, the right to vote represents a particularly important opportunity to voice their opinions and values. The postponement has also been particularly devastating for young people under 30, for whom this election would be the first chance to vote.

In connection with the announcement of the elections, an amendment was issued of the elections law in order to increase the minimum level of female representation.⁸⁷ Although a positive development as such, the amendment did not meet the standard that WCLAC and other women's rights organizations had lobbied for. The amendment requires a certain number of listed candidates for each party to be women, nearing 26 per cent of the proposed candidates. It does not however state how many women representatives need to be included in the actual Parliament. Also, WCLAC believes that the quota for female representation should be at least 30 per cent.

New Law on Civil Society Organizations

In February, an amendment to the current Law on Charitable Association and Civil Society Organizations was issued by a presidential decree, but then abolished due to the protests of civil society organizations. The new law was highly contested by civil society organizations, including WCLAC, as it continued the trend of further shrinking space for civil society. According to the new law, NGOs would be required to submit their yearly plan of action to the government and align this with governmental policy.⁸⁸ This completely undermines the role of civil society as an independent watch dog function and cripples their ability to carry out their work as an essential part of a democracy. Furthermore, the law also prohibited NGOs from using more than 25 per cent of their budget on salaries, which would significantly limit NGOs' ability to hire adequate staff and to carry out essential services.

Moreover, the Article 33 related to fundraising was amended from the original law, to become "Associations and bodies have the right to collect donations from the public or through the establishment of parties, charitable markets, sports matches or any of the means of collecting funds for social purposes that were established for a system issued by the Council of Ministers in

⁸⁶ Al Jazeera, 'Abbas delays Palestinian parliamentary polls, blaming Israel', available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/30/palestinians-polls-hamas-plo> accessed 17 July 2021.

⁸⁷ https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security_council_briefing_-_26_january_2021_2.pdf

⁸⁸ aman-palestine, 'Civil Society Organizations express their absolute rejection of the Law on Charitable Associations and Civil Society Organizations', available at: <https://www.aman-palestine.org/en/activities/14840.html> accessed 17 July 2021.

⁸⁹ Middle East Eye, 'Palestinian Authority's push to regulate NGOs raises fear of power grab', available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/abbas-new-law-will-turn-palestinian-nonprofits-government-agencies-according-palestinian-ngos> accessed 17 July 2021.

which the terms and conditions Unconditional aid for her, according to the fundraising. Moreover, Article 39 of the same law related to dissolving the NGOs, was also amended and became: If the association or body is dissolved, the department shall undertake the procedures of liquidation or appoint a liquidator for a fee, including the liquidation of the minister. The minister shall transfer the movable or immovable funds of the dissolved association or organization to the public treasury of the State of Palestine or to a Palestinian association or organization similar to it in objectives.

The law would in essence signify that many NGOs, WCLAC included, would have to close their operations as these would be impossible to carry out given the new legal constraints. The effect of this would not only be a significant blow to Palestine's democratic development, but it would also further increase the hardship of marginalized groups that NGOs serve, included the hundreds of disadvantaged women that WCLAC supports yearly.

The decree was nullified on May 11th following the heavy pushback from civil society and other actors. The threat of shrinking space for civil society remains however, and WCLAC together with other NGOs continue to carefully guard the integrity of Palestinian civil society.

Family Protection Bill

During December 2021, WCLAC was alerted through media reports that the 2nd draft of the Family Protection Bill was being discussed through the Palestinian Cabinet weekly meeting. Upon that, WCLAC in cooperation with Al Muntada called for an urgent meeting to discuss the exclusion of women lead NGOs from the process.

In December 2021 the Palestinian Cabinet discussed the draft Family Protection Bill. Palestinian civil society and women organizations have not participated in the review of this draft prior to sending it to the Palestinian Cabinet. Therefore, Al Muntada for Combating Violence Against Women sent an urgent official letter to the Prime Minister's Office. The letter specifically focused on the leading role women organizations played in developing previous drafts of the Family Protection Bill, where their contribution was very crucial and based on their practical experience working with women victims of GBV. Thus, the exclusion of women organizations from the process of reviewing subsequent drafts will adversely affect the whole process of having technical expertise of civil society organizations.

The Legal Committee at Al Muntada carried out a meeting to discuss the new draft law to define changes made on the previous draft that was submitted to the Cabinet. Review of the new draft law focused on changes made from previous draft. WCLAC introduced a number of comments; which included: the introductory note must include explanation on the philosophy and principles of the law and the social and legal justifications for its adoption, as well as the social need for it based on the legislative plan of the State of Palestine. Review of the new draft law also showed that the definitions section also requires some modifications to ensure compliance with international human rights conventions; especially CEDAW. The definition section of discrimination, which was included in previous draft was taken out from this draft. Finally, concerning the identification of the family, it needs special clarification as there is a decline in the determinants of the family to which the law applies, especially since the Sharia judiciary considered the official marriage contract is the determinant among the woman and man. Al Muntada and WCLAC will continue its review of this new draft law and will send its comments to MOWA asking them to consider these comments in the last version prior to approval. As of today, the draft law was not passed by a Presidential Decree and instead, the Palestinian feminist and women's human rights movement was severely attacked by a counter- campaign by traditional and conservative elements within society, where women activists and women's organizations were subjected to a smear campaign especially on social media defaming feminists and human rights defenders calling for the passage

of the law. The counter campaign claimed that we are bringing “alien” and foreign suggestions to “destruct” the Palestinian family and that women are trying to derive their sources from the CEDAW Convention, which they believe has negative implications and contravenes with Palestinian social, cultural and religious context. The absence of a genuine political will by Palestinian decision-makers resulted in hesitance in the passage of the Family Protection Bill under the pretext that the law is controversial and requires further discussions among different elements of society; thereby leaving the Palestinian feminist movement at the forefront and on their own to confront the counter attacks to which they were subjected to.

Israeli Elections and New Government

On March 23rd Israel held legislative elections for the fourth time in two years. On June 2nd Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett announced the formation of a rotation government, ousting incumbent Prime Minister Netanyahu. The government was ratified on June 13th with a broad coalition of eight parties, including Ra’am, Israel’s first Arab party to join a ruling coalition.⁹⁰

The parties making up the governing coalition have varying views on the state of occupation in the OPT and how to move forward, including on whether they propagate a one- or two state solution. The result may very well be a status quo of the current situation.⁹¹ Instead the government has indicated priority areas to include domestic interests to Israel, such as health, transportation, and education. This indicates that IHL violations are likely to continue as before, without any change in sight. The new Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett supports illegal Israeli settlements and is completely opposed to a Palestinian state.⁹² The PA has warned that the new government may prove “even worse” than the former one, although Netanyahu’s ruling period was stated as being “one of the worst periods” of the on-going occupation.⁹³

(International Criminal Court Ruling (ICC

In February 2021, (ICC) panel of judges determined that the court has jurisdiction in the OPT, allowing inquiries on violations occurred in Palestine.⁹⁴ This is a highly welcome step toward greater accountability and inquiries into Israeli aggressions and IHL violations within the occupation. Israel stated their intentions to formally reject the ICC’s decision to open an investigation into possible war crimes against Palestinians, claiming that the court lacked power to investigate. The court is likely to investigate suspected war crimes committed during and after the 2014 war, as well as the expansion of Israeli settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which is illegal under international law.⁹⁵ WCLAC is now working to ensure that a gender component is clearly included in the ICC’s investigation into war crimes. Women are often particularly vulnerable to aggressions and IHL violations, and are also impacted in ways specific to their gender.

90 ‘After Netanyahu fails, Lapid gathers 56 recommendations to form next government - Israel Election 2021 - Haaretz.com’, available at: {<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/.premium-after-netanyahu-fails-bennet-lapid-eye-chance-to-form-government-1.9776010>} accessed 13 July 2021.

91 Middle East Eye, ‘Palestinian Authority’s push to regulate NGOs raises fear of power grab’, available at: {<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/abbas-new-law-will-turn-palestinian-nonprofits-government-agencies-according-palestinian-ngos>} accessed 17 July 2021.

92 The Guardian, ‘New Israeli government is just as bad as the last, says Palestinian PM’, available at: {<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/14/naftali-bennett-israel-world-leaders-welcome>} accessed 17 July 2021.

93 Times of Israel, ‘Palestinians leery of new Israeli government’, available at: {<https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinians-leery-of-new-israeli-government/>} accessed 17 July 2021.

94 AP NEWS, ‘Israel rejects ICC probe, saying it lacks jurisdiction’, available at: {<https://apnews.com/article/israel-war-crimes-west-bank-courts-crime-a85e-2c4b06b2b298961686f1fd7bfa52>} accessed 13 July 2021.

95 AP NEWS, ‘ICC gives Israel month to seek deferral of war crimes probe’, available at: {<https://apnews.com/article/israel-war-crimes-crime-arrests-courts-9fb68b9494be3d6efef841c3a0e5ec67>} accessed 13 July 2021.; Israeli Settlements and International Law, available at: {<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/01/chapter-3-israeli-settlements-and-international-law/>} accessed 13 July 2021.

Human Rights Council Resolution

On another positive note, the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) decided to urgently establish an on-going, independent, international commission of inquiry on May 27th of this year. The commission is to investigate alleged violations of IHL and IHRL in the OPT including East Jerusalem and in Israel. This is the first commission of its kind; in that it has a broad mandate not limited in time to investigate IHL and IHRL in both the Palestinian and Israeli territories. This is a very welcome decision that WCLAC hopes will lead to the thorough investigation of past and on-going violations. As with potential ICC investigations outlined above, WCLAC is now working to ensure that a clear gender component is included in the work of the commission of inquiry in order to comprehensively address the compounded violations that target Palestinian women.

Progress towards Outcomes & Achievements

The year 2021 is the first phase of implementing WCLAC's five-year strategic plan, "Learning, Sharing Knowledge, Mobilizing and Empowering Palestinian Women Through Innovation to Create Change". This year WCLAC and other organisations around the world had to adapt with COVID-19 and its impact on women

Strategic goal 1: Enhanced protection of women suffering from discrimination and violence in Palestine

Provision of quality Protection Legal & Social Services and Emergency protection.

As part of WCLAC's strategic direction to contribute to the protection and empowerment of women suffering discrimination and violence, the Centre maintained its work towards providing social and legal counseling and protection services to women victims of violence.

During the reporting period, 1271 women were supported to access their social and legal rights in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as follows; one off- consultations were provided to 767 women and protection, long-term legal or social counselling were provided to 504 women. Analysis shows that 41.6% of the women beneficiaries live in the city yet 27% of them live in area C, most of the legal cases that WCLAC dealt with revolved around divorce (21% of the cases), custody (15% of the cases) and alimony (53% of the cases). The high rate of cases was related to alimony reflects the poverty and living conditions of these women as they depend on the sum of money as a source of living/income as they lack other financial resources due to early marriage, or not completing their studies. Analysis of cases of women that approached WCLAC for social and legal counselling shows that 59.8 % of the women beneficiaries didn't complete their education, 63% are housewives, 8% are unemployed, and 5% work in an unorganized way. Yet this year, 52% of the women left the marital house, 5% were abandoned and 9.75% of them were married at an early age, less than 18 years old. WCLAC's human rights feminist approach to support women's access to justice is conditioned with examining all options to obtain legal settlement either through court representation or mediation. In 2021, WCLAC helped women to access their legal rights through court representation, 567 legal verdicts were in favor them through WCLAC lawyers, 159 through out-of-court settlements and mediation facilitated by WCLAC's team of lawyers and social workers. Further, WCLAC feminist approach ensures investing comprehensive and collective efforts to empower women beyond interventions timeframe to support women in claiming and protecting their own rights. While litigating of behalf of women before the Shari'a and Ecclesiastical Courts WCLAC social workers provide psychosocial support through a well-defined intervention plan between designed with women themselves. A total of 388 women received long-term and social counselling through individual sessions as well as providing them with awareness raising material on alimony, custody, and divorce rights. Additionally, taking into consideration mobility

and accessibility issues, especially for women living in remote areas, WCLAC provides consultation through the free help-line and e-counselling. A total of 767 women have received social and legal counselling through the help-line and phone, which provided these women with advice on where to access their rights, this high number can be attributed to the impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and the emergency state therefore, WCLAC made the helpline for 24 hours a day.

Women whose lives is under threat require emergency interventions to protect them. Through the emergency shelter which is the only civil society led shelter 35 women (accompanied with 4 children) between the age of 16-64 years old received sheltering protection after being referred through the National Referral System. 30% of them were forced into marriage, 9% of the women hosted at the shelter encountered sexual harassment from one of their family members, and 60% encountered physical violence for more than one time. 51% were married and 31% were single, 67% did not complete school, 34% were under 20 years old and 47% were under 30 years old.

Nevertheless, the nature of the cases and intervention plans were very difficult, since it is surrounded by many challenges and risks as in some cases the staff was dealing with out-of-wedlock pregnancy, escape from the house because of extramarital relationship, domestic violence and deprivation of rights, and sexual relationships outside marriage. As part of WCLAC's belief of women's right to live in a safe environment through providing them with skills and knowledge to claim their rights and work with local communities to create conducive environment for their reintegration, a total of 28 women managed to return back to their homes. WCLAC ensured through comprehensive coordination with social affairs units in different governorates that these women will benefit from better conditions within their families, and will be protected from violence, in tandem with gaining more dignity and respect.

Remote and marginalized areas are extremely underserved with social and legal services. Accessibility and knowledge about these services are rarely available for women, thus they suffer from dire need for services and awareness to increase their access to their rights. Through building the capacity of grassroots organizations on providing social and legal counseling to women, as well as awareness raising, such women have a window of opportunity to access services in their own communities or nearby ones. It should be mentioned that in 2017, WCLAC extended its outreach through building partnership with Nahdit Bent Al-Reef Charitable Society in Dura southern Hebron, as it covers 45 villages through health care services it provides, and the trust it holds within the local community. In 2021, WCLAC provided the CBO team with guidance and support in the quality of providing services, support in documentation, organizing events and activities, financial support and legal and social guidance meetings.

Moreover, the four partner grassroots organizations, Jericho Women Charitable Society (JWCS), Tubas Charitable Society, Al Najdeh and Nahdet Bent Al Reef Charitable Society NBRCs provided social and legal services to 201 women. 129 women received both social and legal services, and 72 received social and legal consultations. The majority of cases addressed denial of rights by close family or husbands, specifically delaying dowry, whilst others covered physical and sexual assault, child custody, family disagreements, divorce, and maintenance payments. Furthermore, WCLAC continued to support CBOs, in building its financial, managerial and funding capacities to provide quality services.

WCLAC continued in building the capacity of the staff to provide quality services to women victims of violence. Moreover, WCLAC conducted 4 follow-up meeting with 8 staff members, and general assembly on developing action plan and preparing trainings and activities as well as provide 11 supervision sessions to discuss legal and social cases as well as discuss awareness raising activities and the materials that should be developed.

As for awareness raising sessions, JWCS and NBRCs also managed in conducting 47 awareness raising sessions in 7 marginalized areas Dura, Yatta, Al Samou', Al Fawar refugee camp, Jericho,

Al-Ouja and Ain-Al Sultan refugee camp to 736 participants (16 were males) mainly housewives, volunteers and youth. The sessions focused on cases related to domestic violence, the role of law in protecting women, the Personal Status Law when it comes to marriage contract, conditions of marriage and divorce rights, as a result 52 women requested social and legal consultations during the sessions.

Strategic goal 2 Strengthened women's right to access to justice and elimination of discriminatory policies against them

Development of Policies & Procedures to eliminate Discrimination against Women

Within the framework of 25th anniversary of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its adaptation by the State of Palestine, WCLAC and MIFTAH have developed a **national-level review assessment report for implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by the Palestinian state**. This report was presented as additional information on the situation in Palestine regarding compliance with and enforcement of the practice of women's rights, their empowerment and achievement of gender equality. WCLAC used this report as an advocacy tool during the events related to Beijing+25 Declaration and Platform of Action. Starting from the virtual convention of the 65th session of the Commission of the Status of Women in March 2021, where WCLAC and MIFTAH organized two virtual events on two main themes addressed in the follow up report and which are also the themes of CSW: namely leadership and meaningful participate and gender-based violence. Which was addressed in the context of the daily lives of Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli colonial occupation and structured patriarchy.

Despite Palestine's accession to international conventions and treaties, no credible political will is available to enact modern and non-discriminatory laws that comply with these conventions. At the national level WCLAC continued its efforts to influence the Palestinian Authority to comply with international conventions and treaties it acceded to; especially CEDAW. WCLAC strategy to influence policy and decision-making process through research and surveys provides the Palestinian government with evidence on priorities and themes to undertake legal reform and to better understand gaps in the legal system that prevent women from accessing their rights. Joint marital property rights might be considered one of the taboos in Palestinian society. During this reporting period WCLAC continued its work to advocate for better protection for women through the upcoming revision of the Family Protection Bill. WCLAC, Al-Muntada Forum to Combat Violence against Women and the Amal Coalition have previously submitted several recommendations on how to render the new law more gender sensitive and secure better protection against gender-based violence. After a reading of the latest draft law in the Palestinian Cabinet on May 11th, WCLAC and several other women's rights organizations attended a meeting with the Minister of Women's Affairs (MoWA) Dr. Amal Hamad. It was then decided that the Minister would take the 6 recommendations into consideration and push for the delay of the next reading until appropriate amendments could be made to the draft law. Since then, there has been a counter campaign launched by conservative elements in Palestinian society, led by Sharia Lawyers. The campaign advocates against the passage of the Family Protection Bill and stands in opposition of the proposal submitted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development for the passage of the draft law as it was most recently presented to the Cabinet in the previous reading. One of the main reasons for this is the apparent link between the draft law and the Palestinian accession or ratification of international treaties and conventions, including CEDAW. In light of this development, WCLAC and other women's organizations are joining efforts to encourage the passage of the law in order to provide the necessary legal framework for women victims of violence. Although WCLAC maintains that the current draft does contain several gender gaps, given recent developments it is advisable to advocate for the immediate passing of the law by a Presidential Decree, so as to improve the current protection for women.

“WCLAC Issues Report “Towards a Fair and Gender Sensitive Civil Service Law

March 2021, WCLAC issued a thematic report entitled “Towards a Fair and Gender Sensitive Civil Service Law”, where WCLAC has assessed earlier the essential need to review the Civil Service Law, which requires modifications to include gender sensitive provisions to promote gender equality. This report was produced based on a policy paper that was prepared by WCLAC during November 2020, concerning Civil Service Law, which aimed to highlight the main aspects of gender-based discrimination within the civil service law. This policy paper has been discussed with representative of governmental organizations, MOWA, the General Personnel Council, and CSOs. Key members of civil society, feminist organizations, representatives from relevant ministries have participated in these meetings to discuss gender equitable policies and legislation based on findings of thematic report. It also aimed to discuss the main recommendations presented in the developed policy paper of the Civil Service law. The discussion with these key members focused on the gaps in the draft civil service law that prevent women from acquiring leadership positions and initial recommendations. This discussion and feedback from the participants provided WCLAC with insight on the way forward to develop the thematic report. Thus, the study aims at influencing and advocating for modifying existing laws and adoption policies and procedures that promote acquire leadership positions. Accordingly, the study realizes that the Palestinian Civil Service law like many other laws and regulations have constituted in their content and applications, a notion of discrimination against women and a consecration of the predominant patriarchal culture, which preserves the traditional patterns of men's and women's roles.

WCLAC Launches Analytical Report on Femicide

WCLAC also issued an analytical report in Arabic on femicide in Palestinian society under the title “Femicide in the Time of Corona”. In this report WCLAC analyzed the 58 cases (25 cases in Gaza and 33 cases in the West Bank) of femicide it documented during 2019 and 2020. Analysis of these cases show that 37% of them were single, 32% were married, 3% were engaged, 3% were widows and the rest we did not have enough information about their social status. Analysis of the cases also show that 27% of these murders were committed by the brother of the victim, 23% were committed by the husband, and the other 23% of the cases were also committed by the father, while the rest of the cases were committed by the others such as the stepfather, the brother in-law and others. Analysis of the cases showed that suicide cases during 2019- 2020, registered (11) cases, equivalent to (19%) of the total number of (58) cases, with no insufficient information, hence remained unclassified. While (13) cases were classified as suicide with a ratio of (22%), according to the information provided by the concerned authorities or by the family members of the victim. The remaining (34) cases with a percentage of approximately (59%) were confirmed as killing cases (femicide).

WCLAC Submits Report on Femicide in the Palestinian Society to the Special .Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences

In April 2021, WCLAC jointly with the Palestinian NGO Forum to Combat Violence Against Women (Al-Muntada) submitted a report on Femicide in the Palestinian Society to the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Ms. Dbravka Simonovic. The report covered the period from 2016-2020, addressing the lack of progress in the reduction of the rate of Femicide crimes in Palestine due to the predominance of discriminatory and outdated laws and legislation inherited from previous rules over the oPt, and due to the conflicting legal systems in

the West Bank and Gaza which negatively impact the lives of all Palestinians especially women and girls' victims of GBV and femicide.

The report aimed at emphasizing the legal measures and amendments taken on the national level, as well as challenges in implementing an evidence-based response to the prevention of femicide. The report demonstrated the results of WCLAC research analysis of femicide crimes during the years (2016- 2020), including during the Covid-19 pandemic and its comparison with data before the pandemic. Finally, the report suggested national recommendations to combat femicide and GVB in Palestine. [Read the Report](#)

Strategic goal 3: Increased social responsibility of the Palestinian community towards women rights and elimination of discrimination against them

WCLAC has considered digital means to **promote accountability of duty bearers** is perceived as most relevant due to safety protocols used to prevent transmission of COVID-19. A digital campaign has been designed and implemented during the first half of 2021 to influence different duty bearers through accountability sessions and videos. Through engaging youth in accountability sessions, different duty bearers realized that women participation in the emergency response to COVID-19 pandemic is a national request that needs to be on their agenda. An online Campaign has been launched to amplify grassroots women voices with regards to their leadership role as community peace builders and community leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was followed by carrying out a series of virtual accountability sessions led by youth with Palestinian officials from relevant Ministries around women's participation in COVID-19 national response and decision making and other WPS related topics.

Despite limited political will to engage women in the decision-making process during the emergency response to COVID-19, a significant number of women made remarkable achievements. These achievements were at the community and national levels through introducing innovative individual and collective efforts to respond to COVID-19. WCLAC perceived to feature grassroots women who might not be well known through the media or to the general public. Their stories were worth highlighting to inspire other women and to emphasize their role in responding to the impact of pandemic. Accordingly, features stories were developed about women leaders from local communities about their roles in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and promoting the agenda of women, security and peace in their communities.

WCLAC believes in enhancing social **mobilization in the Palestinian community**, that meaningful change in favor of women's rights begins at the grassroots level. For this reason, WCLAC works with volunteer clusters to advocate for legal and policy reform and to grow an awareness of women's rights in underserved and marginalized communities throughout the West Bank. Volunteer mobilization also empowers women (as well as men who support women's rights) with skills to develop their capacities, self-esteem, social status and voice in the public sphere.

In 2021, WCLAC established **thematic Hubs**, which is considered a new strategic component of social mobilization. The main aim of establishing these hubs is to mobilize community members and influence them to act as alliance and active agents of in their communities. WCLAC conducted two meetings, the first introductory meeting of the human rights defenders' hubs was carried out with a total of 18 Females, aging range between 22-35 years old. The second preparatory meeting was with lawyers' hub with a total of 15 lawyers (12 F, 3 M), their age between 22-35. WCLAC has introduced in both meetings this strategic component at WCLAC and presented the objectives and methodology of these hubs.

WCLAC developed a capacity building program to equip the 38 young male and female volunteer with skills and knowledge on women's rights. They are then provided with coaching to design and carry out local initiatives in their local communities to promote women's rights. As such, WCLAC

conducted 4 training sessions were conducted focusing on gender, human rights and GBV, the Family Protection Bill and Penal Code, and launched two initiatives.

WCLAC also trained 30 women activists on managing social and legal awareness sessions based on gender-based violence and women's rights. Participant women activists were between the age of 35- 45 years old from underserved areas in southern Hebron (such as Dura, Beit Awa, Al-Fawar, Kharas, Al Thahreyah, Beit Mreisem, and Al Samou' villages). these activists were able to conduct 37 awareness sessions targeting 610 women in different communities (such as in 7 villages in Southern (Dura, Al-Fawar, Kharas, Al-Thahriya, Beit Mreisem, Beit-Al Rush, Al-Samou' and Abu-Al Ghuzlan .The awareness sessions focused on gender-based violence, electronic blackmailing, early marriage, and rights related to inheritance. Moreover, the activists talked about the organizations that provide services to women such as WCLAC and other institutions based on the National Referral System.

Another two groups of women activists were formed in Tubas and Tulkarm, with 20 feminist activists, 10 in each group. These women activists were exposed to 8 training sessions aimed to build their capacities on gender and women's rights and to transfer their knowledge to other women in their communities. accordingly, the women activists were able to hold awareness-raising sessions on gender and gender-based violence in their communities in Tubas and Tulkarm governorates, targeting more than 385 women in these areas. Also 4 protection committees have been formed since the beginning of the project (Jenin / Tubas / Qalqilya / Tulkarm), including 40 members from community actors, 24 of them are males. Moreover, 16 training sessions were provided to build the capacity of committee members, 4 training days for each committee, and 8 follow-up meetings were held with committee members.

These protection committees were exposed to coaching sessions to design and carry out awareness sessions in their community. As a results, the committee members were able to carry out 21 awareness-raising meetings with their local communities, targeting 315 community members, 210 of whom were male. Finally, the protection committees were able to refer more than 10 cases of women victims of GBV to different service providers in their communities.

Finally, WCLAC trained 66 (10 males and 56 females (Sharia lawyers in Ramallah, Hebron and Bethlehem between the age group of 22-26 years as part of its capacity building programs for Shari'a lawyer trainees.

Strategic goal 4: Enhanced effective institutional and human capacity development at WCLAC

The three new policies that were drafted last year related to Child Protection to provide guidelines to WCLAC and its employees with the aim to sustain a safe environment for the children they encounter during the activities and protect them from any harm, anti-corruption to promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively. Moreover, the policy provides guidelines to all of WCLAC's employees during their daily operations through providing the required practical knowledge to detect and prevent any corrupt actions or practices, and finally policy on harassment, to provide guidelines to all of WCLAC's employees the required practical knowledge to detect and prevent any Harassment actions, discrimination as well as sexual exploitation and abuse of authority, were approved by the Board of Directors in September. WCLAC is committed to provide a safe environment for all employees free from discrimination on any ground and from harassment at work including sexual harassment. It should be noted that these three policies will be activated in the beginning of 2022.

Moreover, WCLAC finalized the complaint mechanism with external complaints. This means that complaints could be processed from clients, partners and all stakeholders. Until this moment, it has not been approved by the Board of Directors, as they have submitted a set of recommendations and observations in order to amend them. As for WCLAC's Human Resources' Manual review it has been suspended, especially after the work that has been done to update job descriptions, approve the salary scale, and place employees. Finally, WCLAC began to work on drafting the incentive system.

Challenges

Continued Spread of COVID-19 and its Impact of WCLAC's Interventions

Palestinian women have spent most of 2020 in "triple jeopardy": the IHL violations and the occupation by Israeli military forces; the patriarchal structures and high prevalence of gender-based violence within Palestinian society; and the threat of COVID-19, which has exacerbated all structural inequalities even further. The WCLAC report released in July 2020, bears witness to women's suffering through the testimonies collected by our field researchers and from the hundreds of women who have reached out to the GBV helpline seeking urgent protection, counselling, and support. The impacts of the pandemic have been palpable through the experiences of women seeking the services of WCLAC.

As for the Inaccessibility to WCLAC services due to Health Risks, the extension of a total lockdown and shutdown of institutions might prevent women from access to social and legal services provided at our branch offices, WCLAC will build on its successful experience accumulated in 2020 during several periods of lockdown. WCLAC staff will provide phone consultations will be provided through linking the free helpline and other landlines to mobile phones of the social workers. E-counselling will also be reinforced to provide consultations to women. WCLAC will also disseminate messages through social media about our phone and online services to be boosted in order to reach women in different

Increased Leverage of Tribalism and Conservative Political Parties

One of the risks that emerged last year and still can be identified for this reporting period, revolved around calls of some tribes and political groups to have Palestine withdraw from the CEDAW convention and/or impose reservations. This created social unrest; especially through incitement made through statements published by some tribal leaders. This was combined with incitement led by some lawyers against adoption of the Family Protection Bill. In this context, WCLAC understood the importance of reviewing its approach to address the public, governmental bodies, partnering women and human rights organizations and the donor community. The staff were also aware of the impact of this situation on their work and outreach to local communities. Therefore, WCLAC defined its unified human rights message to be communicated with different stakeholders, while emphasizing that WCLAC will not compromise its principles towards promoting women's rights and gender equality. WCLAC also addressed local media outlets emphasizing its position towards advancing gender equality while calling the PA to abide by the international conventions that it has acceded to; especially CEDAW.

Israeli Occupation Policies and Political Instability

The occupation policies continue to be a multilateral challenge for WCLAC, not only due to political instability but also because we have come to understand that increased violence from the occupation leads to more violence endured by women within the general society and the household as well, which is shown in women's voices. The violence of the occupation disproportionately affects women, both directly and indirectly especially when we talk about residency revocation, minors' house arrest and house demolitions. As the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women highlights in her report on Israel, "patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes are deeply entrenched in society and petrified and tolerated in the context of conflict and occupation constituting [the] root causes of GBV against women." Recognizing the gendered nature of the occupation, and its direct effect of legitimizing and perpetuating GBV, she makes a clear call for Israel to end "the occupation and conflict and to promptly address its gendered impact in line with its obligations under human rights and humanitarian law principles." This is further exacerbated by the continued internal political divide which works against the interests of the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and increases sufferings of women, especially victims of gender-based violence.

The unstable political situation and split between West Bank and Gaza has adversely affected WCLAC's efforts to influence policy and decision-making process to promote women's rights. The dysfunctional status of the Palestinian Legislative Council stopped enactment of new laws and provided power for the President to issue these laws through Presidential decrees. This could not support WCLAC to pursue its mission on influencing policy and decision-making process.

Fundraising Challenges, and a Shrinking Space for Human Rights and Civil Society Organisations

Similarly, to last year WCLAC continues to suffer from the shrinking spaces for human rights organisations and limited funding. The unstable political and financial setting of the area has led to increased competition. There is significantly less core funding available as donors continue to prioritise special projects rather than programmes. Donors have shifted priorities to other areas in the region. This shift in funding has made it difficult for WCLAC to meet the needs and requirements of its beneficiaries and is struggling with overheads and running costs.

Shrinking spaces at the local level is also affecting WCLAC's activities due the Palestinian Authority measure imposed through enactment of the cybercrime law. Any advocacy or influencing messages are under surveillance, which increases pressure on WCLAC's plans of holding duty bearers accountable to human rights. Also, Civil Society Organizations expressed their absolute rejection of the Law by Decree concerning the amendment of Law No. 1 on Charitable Associations and Civil Society Organizations and its amendments published in the official Palestinian newspapers on 2nd/03/2021. This law by decree was issued within the framework of several ongoing laws by decree that are drafted in full secrecy and behind closed doors and came after the presidential decree on 15/01/2021, which calls for holding general elections (legislative, presidential and PNC) in the midst of the major and accelerating deterioration of the Palestinian political system as a whole. The decree hinders the right of assembly and organization and the right to exercise activities independent of ministries and the executive authority. It also transfers CSOs to ministry branches, which will confiscate the roles of the boards of directors of these civil society organizations.

Unfortunately, the law by decree targeted the amendment to Article 13 of the original law regarding the certified administrative and financial reports, which the associations present to the relevant ministry by a date no more than four months from the end of the fiscal year. It added a new provision to the text that obliges associations to present to the relevant ministries an “annual action plan and estimated budget for the new fiscal year in line with the ministry’s plan.” This means that CSOs will be working for the said ministry and not in accordance with its own vision, mission, goals or programs. In other words, it deals with CSOs as government departments under ministries and which must take orders from them, even though these ministries do not have any published plan and have never discussed with CSOs any plan in this regard. This undermines the professionalism, independence and freedom of civic activity, including its monitoring role over the performance of the executive authority and its objective to hold this authority accountable for its violations. The amendment also stipulated that employee salaries and running costs of any said association or commission cannot exceed 25% of the overall annual budget. This means that the executive authority will be in control of CSO budgets and their provisions, how they are distributed, their ceiling within the overall budget and the amount of expenses. This will result in civic work becoming more like contracting and commercial projects, aimed at stripping them of their national, rights-oriented core. Even though in March 9th Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayeh announced the halt some amendments to the law on NGOs and that the Palestinian government will initiate a dialogue with civil society representatives to agree on texts that promote transparency and good governance, the civil society is not safe from the attacks especially that the PA President still renews the enactment of the emergency state.

Nevertheless, the smooth passage of funds between organisations is affected, due to Israeli policies that constrain the movement of funds to bank accounts of Palestinian NGO’s in occupied East Jerusalem. Many NGO and International NGO bank accounts in Jerusalem were closed down completely. These impediments persist also due to new measures adopted by the Palestinian Ministry of Interior, which further complicates the transaction process from organisations in areas under the Palestinian Authority control and those in East Jerusalem. Transactions to East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank are being treated as international transfers, causing delays and extensive bureaucratic measures. WCLAC is addressing these issues in cooperation with the Palestinian NGO network, to overcome the complications imposed by these restrictions.

Human rights Organisations and Women Rights Organisations are facing immense threats through shrinking spaces due to the restrictions imposed by Israeli policies. There are also examples where the NGO Monitor, which is an Israeli led/supported organization has tried to discredit the work of human rights organisations producing reports using false and incorrect information and analysis to present Palestinian NGO’s as supporting “incitement and hatred”, this with the final purpose of trying to influence donors and partner organizations to stop their support.

Risks Assessment and Mitigating Measures

WCLAC recognizes that political changes in neighbouring Arab countries is directly and indirectly affecting our work. Increase of conservatism is indirectly affecting advocacy and awareness raising attempts to promote women's rights. This means that WCLAC has to utilize new strategies and to invest in young males and females to challenge existing patriarchal norms and to create preventive measures to equip men, women and male and female youth with skills and knowledge to remain and endure social change in their communities.

During last year, WCLAC invested in reviewing the risks and mitigating measures to prevent any adverse consequences on the Centre and its work. For the purpose of this report, we highlighted some major risks that we think have a direct and indirect impact on our work and women's rights and the relevant mitigating measures took by WCLAC's team. Political instability still plays a major role in increasing gender-based violence. Intensity of conflict and aggression against Palestinians in general and men in particular is diverted towards women as the least fortunate in the family. WCLAC programs invested in targeting men in local communities to create agents for change who are equipped with knowledge and skills to advocate for women's rights in their communities.

Political instability also leads to increase of settlers' violence and night raids against Palestinians; especially in areas adjacent to Israeli settlements. This is combined with mobility restrictions through the checkpoint regime. WCLAC realizes that impact of such aggression and mobility restriction on women are paramount. These women live in a patriarchal society, which increases its dominance on women through imposing certain rules to *protect* women. Thus, women in need for social and legal services will be victimized both from the patriarchal society and the Israeli measures. Therefore, WCLAC's free helpline provides some refuge for these women through providing them with social and legal advice without the need to physically access our offices.

WCLAC also documents cases of Israeli violations in these areas from women themselves to define the impact of human rights and IHL violations on their lives. These testimonies are then analyzed and submitted to different UN machinery. Instability of the political situation in the region and increased waves of conservatism is also affecting Palestinian society either directly or indirectly. This has created new perceptions within local communities about women's rights and created a kind of recession on women's rights in some local communities. Therefore, WCLAC paid attention to this issue through targeting university students, young male and female volunteers and community activists to raise their awareness on women and human rights and increase their skills to design and carry out community initiatives to promote these rights.

The division between West Bank and Gaza, which led to dysfunctional Palestinian Legislative Council affected the review and enactment of new modern laws. This contributed to maintaining the de facto situation of resorting to existing Jordanian and Egyptian laws; especially the Penal Code and Family Status Law. WCLAC realizes that the State of Palestine has considerable obligations towards international conventions it acceded to; especially CEDAW. Therefore, WCLAC submitted a follow-up report on Palestine based on CEDAW Committee concluding remarks to the State of Palestine to submit a report after two years of the initial review. The report highlighted that the State of Palestine could not commit to concluding remarks set forth by CEDAW Committee in 2018. It drew recommendations to the Committee to exert pressure on State of Palestine to abide by its obligations towards international conventions it has joined; especially CEDAW.

WCLAC's Interrelated Issues

The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) is an independent Palestinian, non-profit, non-governmental organization that seeks to develop a democratic Palestinian society based on the principles of gender equality and social justice. Based on its feminist vision fostering equality and social justice, WCLAC doesn't only play prominent role in addressing gender-based violence in Palestinian society it also contributes in addressing:

Human Rights Issues

Protecting women's rights includes, inter alia, guaranteeing their access to service provisions such as welfare, legal aid, legal protection, health care, and more. In the context of the OPT, this also includes defending Palestinian women against the patriarchal systems and practices embedded in Palestinian society. Further, in the context of the Israeli military occupation under which Palestinian women suffer the double-edged discrimination of ethno-religious identity and gender, women are the most disadvantaged group and therefore the most susceptible to human rights violations. In this context, our work includes documenting eye witness testimonies from women who have been subjected to violence and violations of their rights by the Israeli authorities; in 2021 WCLAC documented 120 such testimonials. Additionally, WCLAC realizes that community members from different segments play a significant role in creating social change among within their local communities through shouldering the responsibility of other community members through raising the awareness of their peers, creating protection networks at the community level that can coordinate and collaborate with governmental and nongovernmental service providers to reveal cases of abuse and violence against women in their communities, and mobilize social change.

Protection of Environment

WCLAC doesn't have a specific policy related to the protection of environment, however WCLAC ensures environmentally friendly interventions. For example, WCLAC uses MIS to record clients' data to minimize as much as possible the use of paper files, most of the time we use recycled paper, the usage of glass cups instead of plastic cups in the organization's offices in addition to the use of emails for correspondence to ensure our concern regarding the protection of environment.

Anti-corruption

Our organization's long-standing commitment to assisting women in achieving their rights with integrity means avoiding corruption in any form, including bribery, maintaining confidentiality and privacy while providing services, as well as complying with the anti-corruption law. We provide guidance to our team (lawyers, social workers and field workers) on how to conduct legal aid, testimonies and counselling in a fair, ethical and legal manner. All associates of our organization are required to read, understand and follow the precepts of our Code of Conduct and procurement manual, which include anti-corruption expectations for all employees. WCLAC developed the anti-corruption manual which aims to promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively. The anti-corruption policy provides guidelines to all of Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling employees during their daily operations through providing the required practical knowledge to detect and prevent any corrupt actions or practices.

By doing so, this policy assists the Center to conduct its operations with integrity, accountability, honesty, transparency and to prevent any form of corruption and bribery. Further, WCLAC decision making process is done at different levels to ensure transparency and accountability. Based on the organizational structure and internal procedures, decisions taken at the Board of Directors are separate and binding for the whole organization. These decisions are separate from those taken by executive management. Further, WCLAC has developed its procurement manual in a way that ensures transparency and separation of roles and responsibilities throughout the procurement process. A committee is defined to open and review tenders responsible of analyzing the offers technically and financially and present their recommendation. The decision is then taken by another level, which is a major part of the anti-corruption process WCLAC follows.

Part II. Detailed Activity Report

Strategic goal 1: Enhanced protection of women suffering from discrimination and violence in Palestine



Part II. Detailed Activity Report

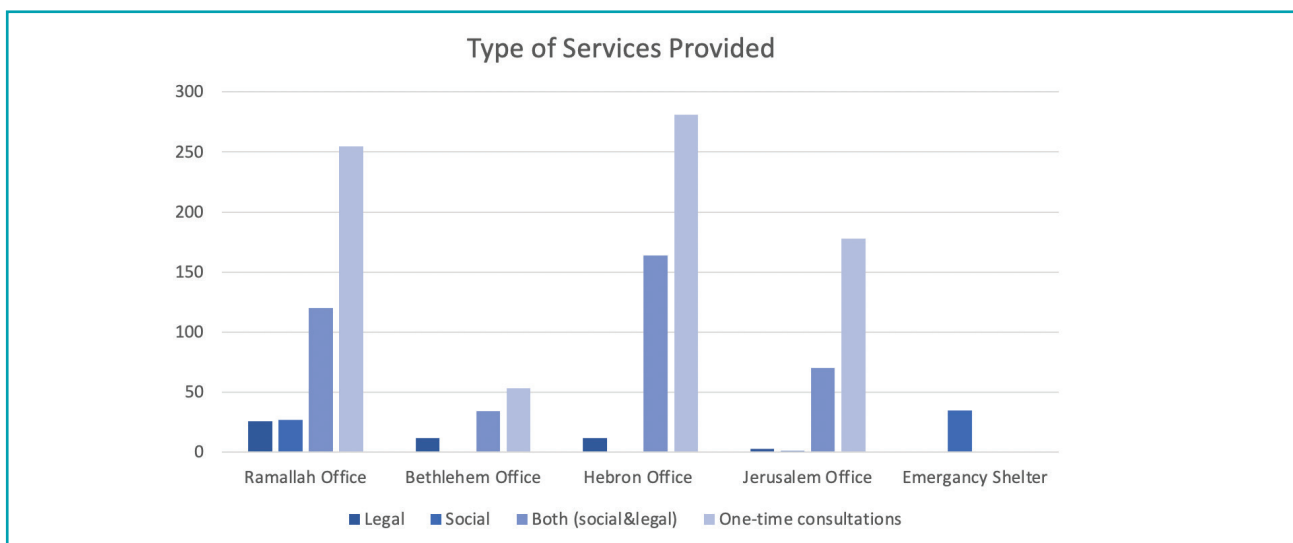
Strategic goal 1: Enhanced protection of women suffering from discrimination and violence in Palestine

1.1. Quality social and legal services are provided to women exposed to discrimination and violence

WCLAC provides social-legal counselling and protection services to Palestinian women in order to promote their self-autonomy and raise understanding of their rights and how to claim them through social counselling or Sharia courts.

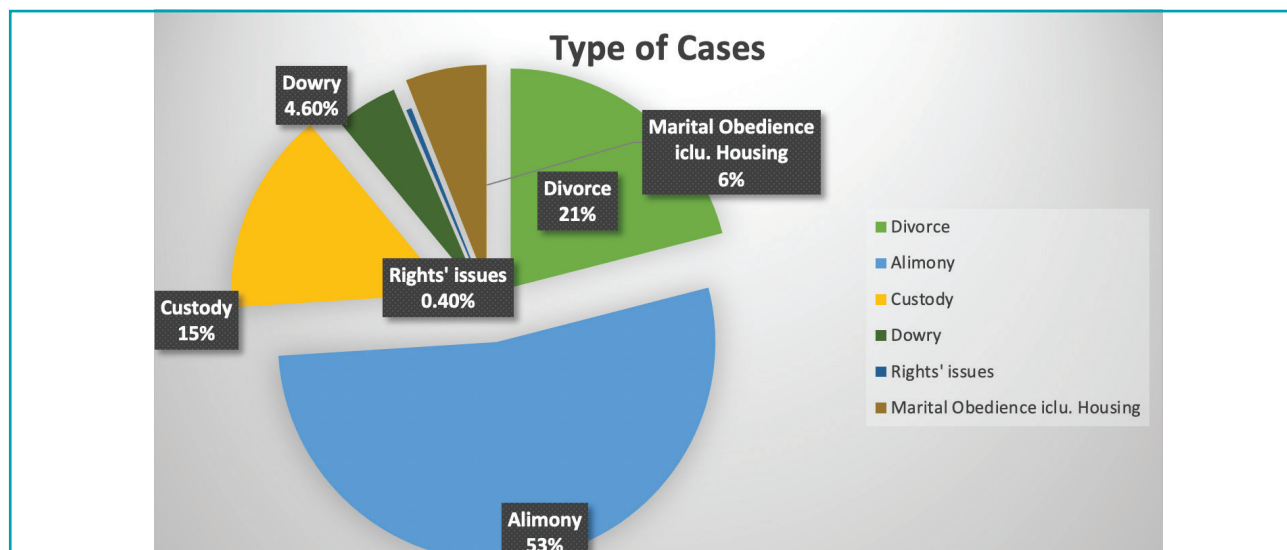
1.1.1. Provide quality legal and social services that respond to the needs of women exposed to violence and discrimination

WCLAC provides some of the most vital and effective services for female survivors of GBV through four organisational branches: Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Jerusalem. Over the reporting period, WCLAC provided services to 1271 women as follows; one off- consultations were provided to 767 women and long-term legal or social counselling were provided to 504 women. As for the geographic location of beneficiary women who received these services 428 were from Ramallah, 252 from Jerusalem, and 556 from the Southern West Bank while 35 women received protection services at the emergency shelter in Jericho. The following chart explains number of cases provided in each branch office

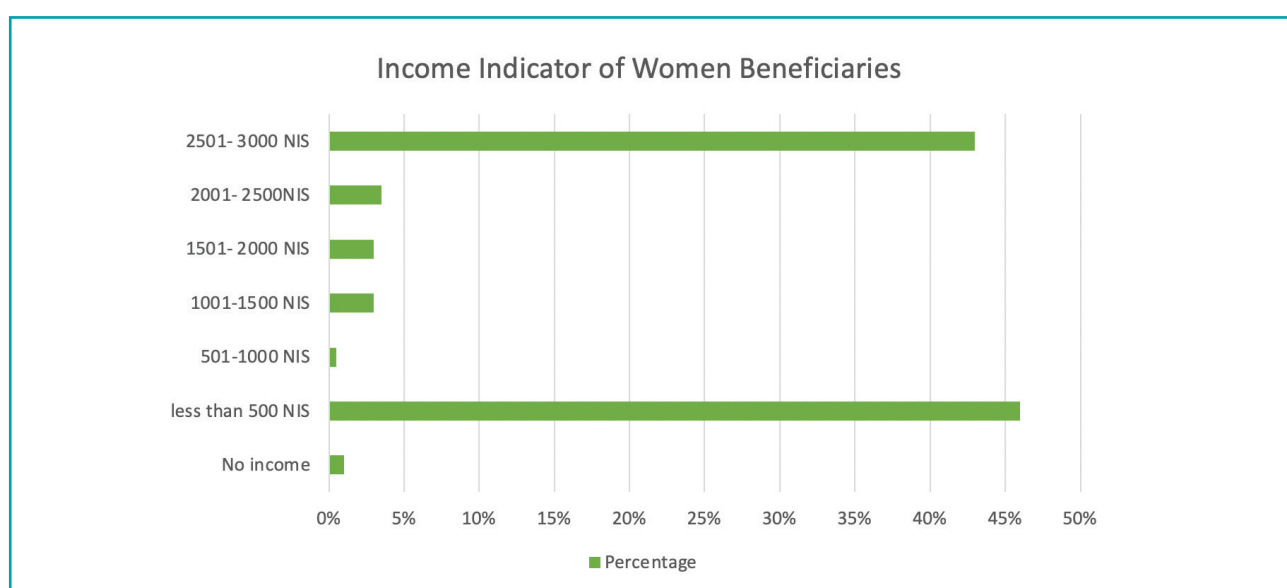


WCLAC has found that certain social realities are exacerbating the situation, requiring social or legal support. Some of these conditions include: the outbreak of COVID-19 and lockdown, early marriage, polygamy, poverty, unemployment, and denial of education that can prevent them from achieving full access to their rights and economic independence.

Throughout the reporting period, WCLAC filed 668 new cases at the courts three of them were brought in front of Ecclesiastical courts while the rest were litigated before the Shari'a court. It is worth noting that each woman might have more than one court case where WCLAC support women to file up to three court cases to support them access their legal rights. A total of 159 cases from previous years were followed up on. Since the start of the year WCLAC's lawyers obtained **567 verdicts** in favour of the women while 159 of these cases were closed through mediation by WCLAC's team of lawyers and social workers while the rest remain pending within the courts. Through mediation, WCLAC was able to support the relevant parties in reaching long-term solutions where women were able to claim some or all of their rights via agreements signed by the husband/family member without bringing the case to court.



WCLAC noticed that most of the legal cases revolved around personal status issues where 53% were around alimony, 21% of the cases were related to divorce, and 15% were related to children's custody. As for the rest of cases, 4.6% focused on dowry, 0.4% were on rights issues, and 6% of the cases were on marital obedience and housing. The high number of cases related to alimony reflects the living conditions of these women as they lack other economic resources, or any means of income thus they depend on the alimony which doesn't provide just life for these women (it's around 400-600 NIS per month). Therefore, sometimes the women head to court to increase alimony, which represent an impasse for many women, as according to the law, a woman can demand an increase in her alimony only if the husband's financial situation improves, where she should provide evidence on that for the court. Women also resort to court asking for an increase in child's alimony given the fact that children's needs are gradually changing. In this case the woman needs to file a new lawsuit with complex and lengthy procedures, while the increase will be very minimal with an average of 30 to 50 shekels per month only.



Girls custody was one of the cases that discriminate between boys and girls, which required WCLAC immediate intervention to influence the personal status law in this regard. Analysis of child custody cases shows that father tend to request the custody of their daughters when they reach the age of 15 where girls are obliged to return to the father's custody. In case where the girls refuse to join their fathers or live with stepmothers and prefer to remain in the mother's custody WCLAC found that 80% of that garnishment cases are filed by the father against his daughter did not merely for the best interest of the girl. Rather, the father files the case because he wants to minimize the expenses accrued on him by obtaining his daughters' custody. In case of the daughters' refusal to join the father's custody, the father will not be obliged to pay the child's alimony. As a step to change this law, WCLAC has taken two cases for strategic litigation, one from the Shari'a court and the other from Ecclesiastical courts requesting consider equality between boys and girls when it comes to the age of custody. WCLAC filed the case at the Constitutional Court to transfer the matter to the constitutional judiciary so that this issue is looked at in a holistic manner so girls can stay in the custody of their mothers just without discrimination based on their gender.

Yet 70% of the women resorted to our services provided at Jerusalem office were holding different ID from their spouses. They were holding a West Bank ID while the husband was holding a Jerusalem ID, which creates a multi-layered burden on women. Among the problems these women are facing is the implementation of court decisions, their inability to leave their husbands even when they are exposed to violence, they will lose their children's custody given the fact that they hold West Bank ID while the children hold Jerusalem IDs. Therefore, the women have no other choice but to stay in the violent relationship, simply because they feel that they have no other choice. Nevertheless, these women sometimes accept legal agreements with fewer rights because they realize that implementing court decisions is very difficult, as they often live in areas far from Jerusalem, such as Hebron, Jenin, Nablus, where this constitutes a great challenge for women who want to maintain their children's custody.

As for alimony cases for women who hold a Jerusalem ID and the husband from the West- Bank the women should file the case in the West Bank so she can enforce implementation of the court decision. This, however, means that women will get lower alimony, which cannot financially maintain her or her children who live in Jerusalem. Given that most of these women have no other income, they find themselves imposed drop the case and return to the abusive husband and violent relationship to ensure that her children and herself have some means of income.

As a result of raising the age of marriage to 18 with some exceptions through a Presidential Decree, we found out some cases of underage marriage occur with registration at some marriage registrars who should file the marriage contract at the court wait until there is a pregnancy then do the official registration. In this case the couple resort to the Shari'a court to officially register the marriage in order to ensure preserving children's rights to. The case is filed by the Personal Status Prosecution and by the end, marriage and parentage are proven, as for the fines they range from 70 dinars to 100 dinars which are imposed on all parties per person. As a result of this decision, and without imposing strict penalties the numbers of women married at an early age is increasing. Therefore, we were and still calling for the increase of age marriage without any exceptions.

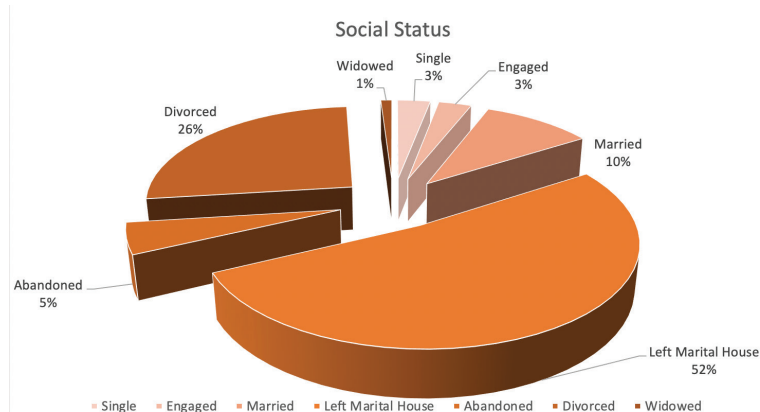
As for the referral of women to our offices, 16% of them were referred to WCLAC service providers from official institutions and NGOs, by partners, 11% were referred from other lawyers and other people, 27% were referred by the courts while the rest approached WCLAC directly around 46%.

During 2021 a total of 388 women requested both social and legal counselling. A ratio of 80% of them were less than 40 years old. Further, analysis of the cases shows that 60% of them have been exposed to marital infidelity more than once, whether through social networks or a direct



relationship. 60%, however, are exposed to betrayal, so they were subjected to physical violence or even to material exploitation, economic deprivation (alimony) or dumping the unaccompanied with debts and financial obligations so that they remain in the marital relationship. However, 28% of the cases were related to marital disputes between the women beneficiaries and their husbands, especially that the husband's family were interfering with their marital life.

It should be mentioned that WCLAC also provided family counselling for 52 women, 88 marital counselling sessions (either for the couple or for the husband) in order to find solutions for the disputes and referred 90 women to other organisations.

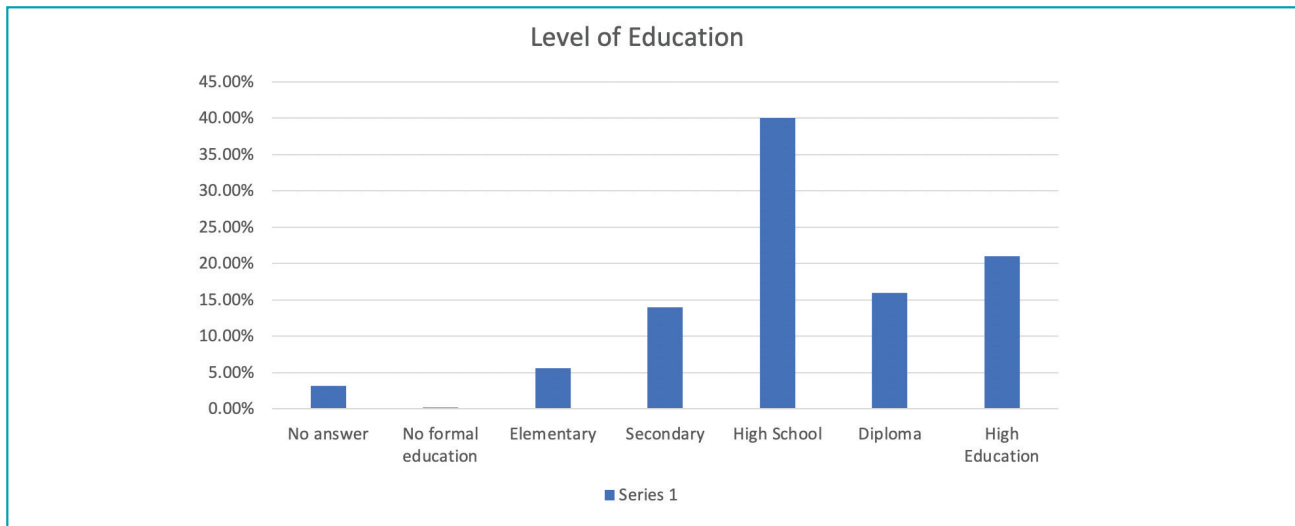


Provide one-off legal and social consultations

In addition to long-term services, WCLAC also provided one-off legal and social consultations for women, which provides advice that would support women decide on social and legal matters. These consultations are provided after awareness raising sessions, through e-counselling, and through the free helpline. During 2021 total of 255 consultations and follow ups were provided in addition to 767 were provided through the helpline. In addition, a total of 512 women approached WCLAC directly seeking a one-off consultation through visiting our r branch offices.

As for the socio-economic situation of beneficiary women, analysis of the cases shows that around 60% of the women beneficiaries didn't complete their education. It was also noticed that 46% of women had a monthly income of less than 500 NIS and 63% of them are housewives. Therefore, 53% of the lawsuits were related to alimony, which can be the only means of income for these women.

Analysis also shows that 52% of women were separated (left the marital house), 26% are divorced, 5% were abandoned by their husbands. Around 3% of women were married between the age of 14-16 years old and some of the women expressed that endogamy is a problem where they might be unable to seek divorce to maintain family relations or are under pressure to waive their legal rights. It was obvious through analysing of these cases that living in the same place of the husband's family or in a close neighbourhood might cause serious family disagreements due to general interference in the woman's daily life.



Success Story: WCLAC enables a woman to access her legal and social rights

W.N. is a 41-years old who has been married for 25 years and a mother of 4 children who hold a West Bank ID while her husband is a Jerusalemite. She sought WCLAC's office for help after discovering the adultery of her husband where his girlfriend delivered a boy. The woman noticed the changes in her husband behavior are started to stay away from the house for many days and it was hard to reach him.

She approached WCLAC seeking the support to obtain alimony and the custody of her children. Through the support of WCLAC W.N. was able to obtain alimony from the Family Affairs Court.

Later on, she decided to get divorce, as she could not accept that she has been betrayed by her husband has abundant his children and started a new family. Through the social counselling sessions, the social worker explored with W.N. the case and provided her with insight about the understanding of the procedures and some of social and legal consequences that might affect her and her children. W.N then took her final decision to file a divorce out of strife and discord. However, due to the husband's continuous absence and inability to reach him to not notify him, WCLAC suggested that she should contact him in order to guarantee her rights especially if the divorce decision is mutually agreed upon. She agreed to contact him and wanted to drop the case as she wanted to end this lengthy process. WCLAC lawyer and social worker managed to convince her to negotiate with the husband about the agreed upon settlement, which will ensure attaining some of her rights. WCLAC lawyer contacted the husband and arranged for a meeting with him to discuss the case and to agree on a settlement agreement. Through the mediation an after meeting the husband, a settlement agreement was reached were the husband agreed to pay W.N. her full dowry of 25,000 shekels. It was then agreed to register this decision with the court so that it would be legal binding. Through WCLAC support W.N did not drop the case and managed to obtain her dowry and was provided with social counselling, which empowered her to take better decision for herself and her family.

1.1.2. Extend women's service provision to underserved communities of Palestine through supporting partner grassroots partners in Jericho, Tubas, Tulkarem and southern Hebron to provide quality services to victims of GBV

Since 2005 WCLAC has been working with grassroots organizations in marginalized communities and remote areas of the West Bank through developing their capacity to provide services to women victims of GBV, and to raise the awareness of women on their social and legal rights. Through its partnership with four local CBOs in Tubas, Tulkarem, Hebron and Jericho WCLAC managed to extend social and legal services to underserved communities. During 2021, WCLAC continued its support to the four CBOs; Tubas Charitable Association, Al Najdeh Society, Jericho Women Society, and Bint Al Reef in southern Hebron through supervision sessions to provide quality services to women to develop their capacities to mobilize their local communities.

During 2021 WCLAC conducted a specialized training for 14 of the CBOs staff of social workers and lawyers aimed to build their capacities on facilitation skills, group counselling, community mobilization, group dynamics and methods of creating agent of change.

Pre and post assessment analysis shows that 86% of the participants believe that the training improved their facilitation skills, 76% improved their knowledge concerning the dynamics of groups, the role of different groups, managing groups and community work

In 2021, the four partner grassroots organizations, Jericho Women Charitable Society (JWCS), Tubas Charitable Society, Al Najdeh and Nahdet Bent Al Reef Charitable Society NBRCS provided social and legal services to 201 women. 129 women received both social and legal services, and 72 received social and legal consultations.

Additionally, NBRCS provided representation in court for 63 cases and they are still pending. The majority of the cases are women being deprived of rights either from the family or the husband especially dowry, alimony, whilst the remainder cover custody, divorce, physical and sexual violence.

During 2021, WCLAC continued in building the capacity of the staff to provide quality services to women victims of violence. Moreover, WCLAC conducted 4 follow-up meeting with 8 staff members, and general assembly on developing action plan and preparing trainings and activities as well as provide 11 supervision sessions to discuss legal and social cases as well as discuss awareness raising activities and the materials that should be developed.

As for awareness raising sessions, JWCS and NBRCS also managed in conducting 47 awareness raising sessions in 7 marginalized areas Dura, Yatta, Al Samou', Al Fawar refugee camp, Jericho, Al-Ouja and Ain-Al Sultan refugee camp to 736 participants (16 were males) mainly housewives, volunteers and youth. The sessions focused on cases related to domestic violence, the role of law in protecting women, the Personal Status Law when it comes to marriage contract, conditions of marriage and divorce rights, as a result 52 women requested social and legal consultations during the sessions.

1.1.3. Develop capacities of service unit staff to provide better services to women victims of violence

Provide service unit staff with knowledge and skills required to provide social, legal, protection services and awareness activities to women

WCLAC provides ongoing support and professional development to its team of social workers and lawyers to maintain providing quality services to women victims of GBV. As such continuous and ongoing professional development and supervision sessions are provided to the team. During 2021

14 of WCLAC's Service and Empowerment Unit staff participated in a specialized training with a total of 20 training hours on interventions during times of crisis i, during which they discussed the roles of lawyers and social workers in developing interventions during such times, case during management, the challenges social workers and lawyer face while dealing with cases times of emergency, and how to develop relevant intervention plans that respond to emerging needs of women in time of crises and challenges that might face WCLAC team; especially after the outbreak of COVID-19.

During 2021 WCLAC anticipated building the capacities of its lawyers in strategic litigation to enable us as feminist human rights organization to influence existing laws and policies. As such WCLAC carried out a total of 10 supervisory and training meetings were held for 6 of WCLAC's female lawyers. These training sessions focused on introduction on international conventions and treaties, process of strategic litigation, CEDAW and analysis of the concluding remarks, the optional protocols, the supremacy of international conventions over domestic laws and constitutional procedures taken by states in the event of conflict, emptiness, shortcomings and ambiguity in local laws and cases of constitutional challenge. The training sessions also focused on cases of female inclusion (related to custody cases) have been adopted in order to submit a constitutional challenge in their regard to their conflict with the Basic Law and international conventions. As a result of the training the team of lawyers analysed the cases we followed; especially those related to child custody to define whether we can take them for strategic litigation. One of the lawyers also prepared a paper on child custody with relation to international conventions Palestine accessed to. The paper focused on the contradictions between Palestinian functioning laws; especially the Basic Law and personal status law. Accordingly, the team of lawyers and the consultant prepared a case to be taken for strategic litigation, which was then submitted to the Constitutional Court call for adopting equal law for the child custody of girls and boys.

WCLAC also continued its capacity and professional development for service unit staff of social workers and lawyers to women victims of GBV. As such the supervision sessions conducted on monthly basis where the 14 social workers and lawyers to ensure providing quality of social and legal services to women exposed to discrimination and violence. Session focused on the review of some cases to discuss relevant interventions that would better support women access their rights as well as new methods and approaches that can be adopted in this regard.

1.2. Protection of women victims of GBV under the national referral system is strengthened by engaging different relevant sectors

1.2.1. Provide emergency protection services to women whose lives are in jeopardy, and survivors of violence

In 2021, 35 women were hosted at the emergency protection shelter in Jericho (accompanied with 4 children). This shelter is a place of immediate protection for women whose lives are under threat and in need of immediate intervention. WCLAC believes that the shelter is only a temporary safe space for women to seek protection and does not substitute the need for social and communal transformation on the approach to GBV. Out of the 35 women (aged 16 – 64 years old), 18 were married, 11 were single 3 were divorced and 3 were engaged. Women sought assistance from the shelter for reasons such as escaping family retaliation for out-of-wedlock relationships or pregnancy, inter-family violence, domestic violence, blackmailing and denial of rights. WCLAC noticed that 34% of the women were between 16-20 years old, 52% of the women were between 21- 35 years old, and 11% of the women didn't have any source of income. Moreover, WCLAC noted a mix of socio-economic problems that have exposed women to different forms of violence and threat on their lives. Some these problems revolved around the absence of free dialogue between family members, emotional neglect and electronic exploitation and blackmailing. Analysis of the cases show that 9% of the women hosted at the shelter encountered sexual harassment from one of their family members, 60% encountered physical violence for more than one time and 30% were forced into marriage. The lack of employment and study opportunities also increased vulnerability to GBV amongst women hosted at the shelter and embedded their ability to leave the vicious circle of violence. Analysis of the cases, for example shows that 65% of the women beneficiaries didn't complete their education.

Professional interventions were developed based on the National Referral System in cooperation with the Family Protection Unit at the Police, the Governorate and the Ministry of Social Development. As such a total of 46 case conferences were conducted with these partners along with 8 meetings via phone due to the spread of COVID-19 and difficulty in movement between governorates. These interventions resulted in returning 28 women to their families after ensuring that there will be better and conducive environment after interventions made with the family by the Ministry of Social Development. One woman is still residing in the shelter while 6 women were referred to another shelter for extensive intervention.

1.2.2. Support the 3 Shelters in the West Bank and develop their staff capacities

During the reporting period, WCLAC conducted two training sessions for Jericho and Nablus shelters' staff (May 1st and May 9th). The participatory training session was held for the staff of both shelters to examine the context in which moral values are adopted at work, as it was agreed on the most important moral values that are adopted in working with women in protection shelters and their reflection within the practices that are carried out. As for the training's methodology it was based on an effective reflection of self-experiences and lessons learned. The participants reflected the moral and values adopted while developing intervention plans, and methods on reflecting on women's behaviour. It is worth noting that this training came as a result of a long discussion and assessment of the needs of the shelters' staff with the aim to develop their skills and exchange of experience and skills.

Moreover, WCLAC worked on developing the capacities of three shelters' staff (Mehwar, Nablus and

Jericho) by conducting 19 supervision sessions to 46 staff members of the three shelters in order to provide quality services to women hosted by the shelters (13 sessions in Jericho, 2 in MEHWAR and 3 in Nablus). The sessions mainly focused on the most important issues and challenges that were faced while hosting women during COVID-19. In particular, the sessions focused on analysis of the cases and the development of the intervention plans, self-empowerment of house mothers as well as women beneficiaries, how to put boundaries between women hosted at the shelter and the housemothers, the importance of aligning the rules and measures among different shelters throughout their stay and discuss some of the professional indicators that reflect the importance of following-up with beneficiaries.

WCLAC also conducted two specialized trainings for 12 member staff of the 3 shelters between October and November on self-care during emergency and stressful situation as well as dealing with the socio-cultural context. The supervision sessions also focused on developing the team work, risk management, application of Psycho-drama and quality of services provided to women beneficiaries in shelters.

As a result of the training, the staff members were introduced to non-traditional intervention methods while working with women victims of violence, which contribute to building interventions consistent with the individuality of each case and also works to help beneficiaries overcome the traumatic experiences they faced during their exposure to domestic violence. The sessions also focused on group dynamics and its impact on the beneficiaries and relationship with the staff. As a result, participants were equipped with skills of self-care and methods of providing the support to women hosted at the shelters in times of emergency.

During 2021 WCLAC led the process of developing the code of ethics for the three protection shelters. This was done through reviewing the moral principles of the protection shelters to create a conducive environment for beneficiaries and workers. This code of ethics will serve as the guiding standard that will govern and organize practices, behaviors and trends of the workers at the protection shelters. It is worth noting that the code of conduct principles document of the shelters sets the main basis for developing the code of ethics. The code of ethics will later set the ethical and legal standards that govern the relationship between the beneficiaries hosted at the protection shelters and the staff. Accordingly, WCLAC followed a participatory approach to develop the code of ethics, which is based on discussion with the shelter staff to collect all related information that can set the basis of the code of ethics. This will enable us to build on the practical experience of the shelters' staff. To achieve this, a training was conducted with the shelters staff followed by a meeting of WCLAC staff to define how to document the best practices to be reflected in the code of ethics.

1.2.5. Build 5 local networks, includes organizations providing services in three sectors social, health and legal (MOH, MOSD, police) and other CSOs that provide services to women victims of GBV)

WCLAC established 5 protection networks comprise of services providers representing the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, The Family Protection Unit at the Police, Prosecution Office, Shari'a Council the Department of Family Protection and Juveniles in the Police, Gender Departments in the governorates, in addition to the Social Counseling Departments in the Ministry of Education and UNRWA. On the civil society level, the committees include organizations such as: Doctors Without Borders, Working Women, the Jericho Women's Association, and the Nahdet Bint Ar-Rif Association. The main aim of these protection networks is the develop the capacities of services providers to better provide services and response to women victims of GBV based on the National Referral System and to increase cooperation and coordination as well as exchange of knowledge. During the reporting period, 22 meetings were conducted for the 90 members of

protection networks of service providers (12 of them are males) for women victims of violence in the five governorates of Hebron, Tubas, Jericho, Tulkarem and Qalqiliya. The meetings mainly focused on discussing general issues related to the challenges that were faced throughout the period related to working with the media, creating a gender sensitive dialogue that empowers women, how to increase the dialogue among the people in order to combat hostile discourse that is still going on against CSOs in general and women organizations in particular. The meetings also discussed the importance of supervision sessions and the role of the network in supervising work to identify common understanding related to members' professional intervention as well as conducting awareness raising meetings to services' providers. Specific focus was on the challenges partners face within the referral mechanism during COVID-19 pandemic; especially that it has been found that the referral process was disrupted, which affected delayed the response to women's need for protection services. =

WCLAC conducted a specialized capacity building training for the local protection networks to enhance their gender-responsiveness and sensitivity in their work. The training saw the participation of 22 members (17 females and 5 males) of the protection committees' members. With their strengthened capacity, the protection networks aim to further support women victims of gender-based violence. The training workshop overall aimed at sharing experiences of the networks members and service providers and develop common understanding of dealing with women affected by gender-based violence and give them the opportunity to share their challenges and hardships in dealing with GBV cases in a safe and professional environment. The training also clarified the roles of members in their work in the field.

WCLAC held a central workshop for women's protection networks in Palestine, which took place in Jericho over two days on November 28th and 29th. The workshops were attended by 30 members of the Protection Networks (24 females and 6 males) from five governorates (Qalqilya, Jericho, Hebron, Tubas, Tulkarm). During the workshop the vision and mission of the protection networks in Palestine were reviewed, based on previous experiences and the importance of analysing the opportunities and challenges facing the work, and this came through a participatory approach that aimed to deepen the common understanding of many of the strategic objectives of the protection networks in Palestine.

1.3 Strategic litigation of "hot" public opinion cases is employed

Carry out strategic impact litigation and legal procedures to introduce new legal tools to change and modify existing laws concerning women

Strategic impact litigation is a means to create a legal precedent that can influence the adoption of progressive laws and policies. WCLAC's aims to utilize the strategic impact litigation to leave a long-lasting impact on laws that would promote gender equality and women's access to justice given the limited political will to adopt progressive laws in Palestine.

In this regard, WCLAC recieved the adoption of the first constitutional case and its official registration before the Constitutional Court through WCLAC's lawyers in the Service Unit, which is the first applied constitutional case in the field of strategic litigation before the Constitutional Court by appealing a decision that is submitted by WCLAC. The case is related to child alimony for two women whose rights were discriminated against according to the law in the Ecclesiastical Court and the Sharia Court.

WCLAC took a femicide case for strategic litigation requesting compensation for the victim's family. In particular, WCLAC took the case of Suha Al Deek who was brutally killed by her husband in front of her children. The murderer was sentenced for seven years in prison after an advocacy campaign led by WCLAC and Al Muntada for Combating Violence against Women. WCLAC took the case for strategic litigation to introduce a legal precedent and influence policy making process to modify provision of the Penal Code calling for compensation for the victim's family. Court sessions stopped for a while during 2020 due to the declaration of state of emergency and shutdown of institutions.

The third strategic litigation case was on matrimonial rights. WCLAC took the permission of a woman who lost her right to the joint property accumulated after marriage and she will pay all the mortgage after being divorced. Litigation in this case will not only support the women to restore her matrimonial rights but also serve as a legal precedent that can support our efforts to introduce new progressive laws.

The first court session was scheduled for the 16th of March 2020. However, due to the widespread of COVID-19 and the announcement of the emergency situation, all the court sessions were put on hold until the pandemic comes to an end. The session resumed in early 2021, which were accompanied with a media and advocacy to inform the public on matrimonial rights and influence the decision-making process.

The fourth strategic litigation case was on femicide case of a women victim who was killed by her fiancé, this strategic litigation started in 2021 and is still in process of requesting compensation for the victim's family.

The three cases are still in court as WCLAC realizes that strategic litigation is a lengthy process. Therefore, WCLAC will continue the litigation process and advocacy to influence the policy and decision-making process regarding femicide and matrimonial rights

Strategic goal 2: Promote women's rights to access justice and eliminate discriminatory policies against women

2.1. Policies and procedures to eliminate discrimination against women in Palestine are addressed

2.1.1. Review of laws and policies to modify them in accordance with CEDAW

Contribute to preparing CEDAW shadow report to the PA and submit it to the PA and submit it to the CEDAW special Committee

CEDAW Committee concluding remarks emphasized considerable number laws and legislations that Palestinian Authority should amend and enact to law to eliminate discrimination against women. Family Protection from Violence law was one of CEDAW Committee recommendations that was also brought to the attention of the Committee through WCLAC Shadow Report. Since 2019 considerable efforts were made to draft the Family Protection Bill. Collective efforts were made to influence the process of drafting the Family Protection Bill through exerting pressure on the Government to include representatives from civil society organizations in the National Committee on Harmonizing Laws in accordance with International Conventions. WCLAC as a specialized organization that provides direct social and legal services to women victims of violence was assigned in the working committee along with Al-Muntada for Combating Violence Against Women to participate in drafting the law. WCLAC accumulated practical experience was significantly contributed to introducing relevant legal provisions to the law. WCLAC vision ensuring prevention, protection and rehabilitation that was presented in its policy paper, was translated within the draft laws that were developed.

During this reporting period WCLAC continued its work to advocate for better protection for women through the upcoming revision of the Family Protection Bill. WCLAC, Al-Muntada Forum to Combat Violence against Women and the Amal Coalition have previously submitted several recommendations on how to render the new law more gender sensitive and secure better protection against gender-based violence. After a reading of the latest draft law in the Palestinian Cabinet on May 11th, WCLAC and several other women's rights organizations attended a meeting with the Minister of Women's Affairs (MoWA) Dr. Amal Hamad. It was then decided that the Minister would take the 6 recommendations into consideration and push for the delay of the next reading until appropriate amendments could be made to the draft law. Since then, there has been a counter campaign launched by conservative elements in Palestinian society, led by Sharia Lawyers. The campaign advocates against the passage of the Family Protection Bill and stands in opposition of the proposal submitted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development for the passage of the draft law as it was most recently presented to the Cabinet in the previous reading. One of the main reasons for this is the apparent link between the draft law and the Palestinian accession or ratification of international treaties and conventions, including CEDAW. In light of this development, WCLAC and other women's organizations are joining efforts to encourage the passage of the law in order to provide the necessary legal framework for women victims of violence. Although WCLAC maintains that the current draft does contain several gender gaps, given recent developments it is advisable to advocate for the immediate passing of the law by a Presidential Decree, so as to improve the current protection for women.

2.1.4. Review laws, policies and develop interventions to promote women's economic rights

Review laws and policies that violate women's economic and social rights

WCLAC focuses on women's economic and social rights in Palestine through advocating for better laws that are based on justice and equality. In March 2021, WCLAC issued a thematic report entitled **"Towards a Fair and Gender Sensitive Civil Service Law"**, where WCLAC has assessed earlier the essential need to review the Civil Service Law which requires modifications to include gender sensitive provisions to promote gender equality. This report was produced based on a policy paper that was prepared by WCLAC lately during November 2020, concerning Civil Service Law which aimed to highlight the main aspects of gender-based discrimination within the civil service law. This policy paper has been discussed with representative of governmental organizations, MOWA, the General Personnel Council, and CSOs. Key members of civil society, feminist organizations, representatives from relevant ministries have participated in these meetings to discuss gender equitable policies and legislation based on findings of thematic report, also to discuss the main recommendations presented in the developed policy paper of the Civil Service law. The discussion with these key members focused on the gaps in the draft civil service law that prevent women from acquiring leadership positions and initial recommendations. This discussion and feedback from the participants provided WCLAC with insight on the way forward to develop the thematic report. Thus, the study aims at influencing and advocating for modifying existing laws and adoption policies and procedures that promote acquire leadership positions. Accordingly, the study realizes that the Palestinian Civil Service law like many other laws and regulations have constituted in their content and applications, a notion of discrimination against women and a consecration of the predominant patriarchal culture, which preserves the traditional patterns of men's and women's roles.

Family Protection Bill

During December 2021, WCLAC was alerted that a draft of the Family Protection Bill was being discussed through the Palestinian Cabinet of Ministers. Upon that, WCLAC in cooperation with Al Muntada form Combating Violence Against Women called for an urgent meeting to discuss the exclusion of women lead NGO's from the process.

On 14 December 2021, a joint letter demanding the full inclusion and active participation of women organizations was sent to the Prime Minister's office. The letter specifically focused on the leading role women organizations played in developing previous drafts of the Family Protection Bill, where there contribution was very crucial as it was based on their practical experience working with women victims of GBV. The letter emphasized that the exclusion of women organizations from the process of reviewing subsequent drafts will adversely affect the whole process of reflecting on the technical expertise of civil society organizations.

The Legal Committee at Al Muntada carried out a meeting to discuss the new draft law to define changes made on the current draft laws, which will be discussed by the Cabinet. It was noticed through the review that changes were made on the definitions that women organizations insisted on, which was in line with provision of CEDAW convention. The definition of discrimination, for example, was taken out from this draft, which created a debate among women organizations members of Al Muntada whether to exert pressure on the government to include or to accept this change and then advocate for that upon the ratification of the law. Further, concerning the identification of the family, it was clear that needs special clarification, in line with Istanbul convention and the Arab Family Protection Model Law. Al Muntada emphasized that changes made on the definition of the family are considered a decline in the determinants of the family to which the law applies. We anticipated including the wider definition of the family, to include the

extended family, the in laws, and the house workers. Al Muntada will continue its review of this new draft law and will send its comments to MOWA asking them to consider these comments in the last version prior to approval.

2.1.5 Provide evidence-based data through documentation of femicide cases to influence adoption of the Penal Code

Document cases of femicide and sexual violence and prepare analytical report

WCLAC carries out ongoing documentation of cases of femicide in order to collate a strong body of data on which to base our advocacy strategies in lobbying for gender-sensitive legislative reform. A sound argument, grounded in facts, can also be used to exert pressure on the government to taking concrete steps in order to amend legislation towards protecting women from violence. It should be noted the structural violence inherent in the unequal balance of power relations between the perpetrator and the victim which is reproduced in social life. As a rule, WCLAC investigates all deaths of women and girls in the OPT, excluding those caused by the Israeli force. WCLAC continues to be a reliable resource in documenting cases of femicide and incest in Palestine.

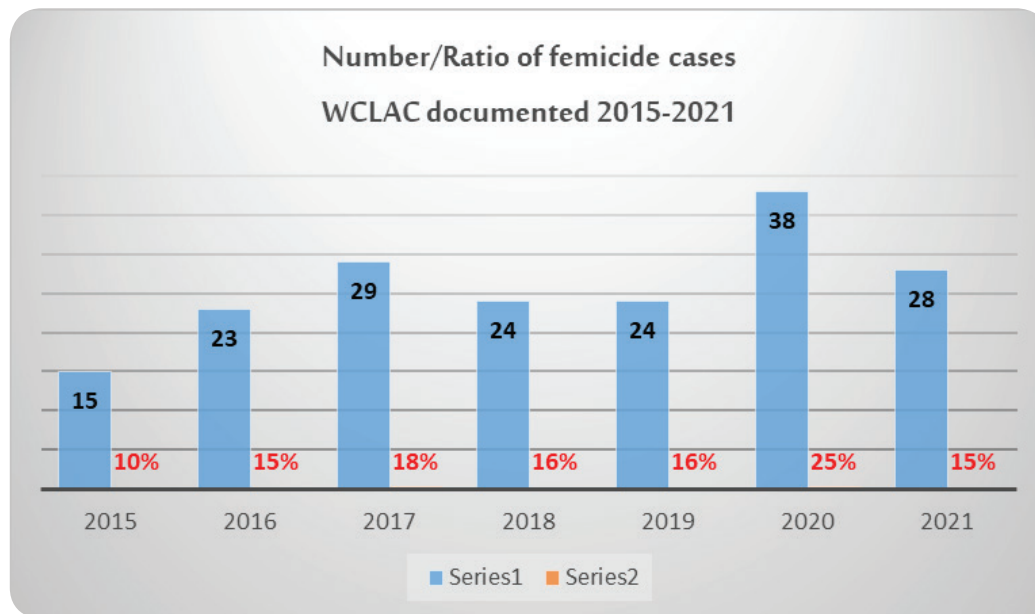
In 2021 and until the end of June, WCLAC have monitored and documented **28** cases of femicide, suicide and death in suspicious circumstances in the West-Bank and Gaza Strip (**16** cases in the West-Bank and **12** in the Gaza strip). According to the analysis 39.2% of the age group related to the cases is between 20-29 years old and 21.4% were between the age 14-19 years old. It is worth mentioning that 10 out of the 28 cases occurred between March – June, during the COVID-19's state of emergency.

In April 2021, WCLAC jointly with the Palestinian NGO Forum to Combat Violence Against Women (Al-Muntada) submitted a report on Femicide in the Palestinian Society to the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Ms. Dbravka Simonovic. The report covers the period from 2016-2020, addressing the lack of progress in the reduction of the rate of Femicide crimes in Palestine due to the predominance of discriminatory and outdated laws and legislation inherited from previous rules over the oPt, and due to the conflicting legal systems in the West Bank and Gaza which negatively impact the lives of all Palestinians especially women and girls' victims of GBV and femicide.

The report aimed at emphasizing the legal measures and amendments taken on the national level, as well as challenges in implementing an evidence-based response to the prevention of femicide.

WCLAC also issued an analytical report in Arabic on femicide in the Palestinian Society under the title "*Feimicide in the Time of Corona*". In this report WCLAC analyzed the 58 cases (25 cases in Gaza and 33 cases in the West Bank) of femicide it documented during 2019 and 2020. Analysis of these cases show that 37% of them were single, 32% were married, 3% were engaged, 3% were widows and the rest we did not have enough information about their social status. Analysis of the cases also show that 27% of these murders were committed by the brother of the victim, 23% were committed by the husband, and the other 23% of the cases were also committed by the father, while the rest of the cases were committed by the others such as the stepfather, the brother in-law and others. Analysis of the cases showed that suicide cases during 2019- 2020, registered (11) cases, equivalent to (19%) of the total number of (58) cases, with no insufficient

information, hence remained unclassified. While (13) cases were classified as suicide with a ratio of (22%), according to the information provided by the concerned authorities or by the family members of the victim. The remaining (34) cases with a percentage of approximately (59%) were confirmed as killing cases (femicide).



The report drew several recommendations that are addressed to the policy and decision makers:

- To legislate and/or approve legislation that guarantees justice and gender equality for women, most importantly the endorsement of the unified Palestinian Penal Code, the Personal Status Law, and the Family Protection Bill, to ensure the prevalence of a comprehensive protection system to victims of GBV.
- To develop and adopt a gender-sensitive definition of femicide at the national level, and take all necessary measures to enhance and further develop the Palestinian National Observatory as the major source of evidence-based data on GBV and femicide to help official duty-bearers to take measures and develop national policies to combat VAWG.
- To raise awareness, activate ongoing learning processes, and develop the capacities of the judiciary personnel, thus influencing their approaches and attitudes in overcoming the patriarchal stereotypes prevailing in our society, specifically against women and girls victims of GBV. This will contribute to more confidence in the judicial system and access of women to justice.

2.1.6 Justice paths are effectively involved in defining gaps within the justice system and introducing suggestions to increase women victims of violence to justice

In March 2021, WCLAC produced an analytic report on results of VAW court monitoring entitled “**Access to justice for women victims of violence in Palestine**”. The report examined how the justice system in Palestine responds to issues that involve violence against women, using

the international obligations of the State of Palestine and national laws as a frame of reference. Moreover, 2 workshops were held virtually with Palestinian BAR of Associations, High Judicial Council and Public Prosecution, aiming at presenting and validating the analytic report of court monitoring. The raised recommendations and suggestions of the participants of the workshops have been addressed and considered in the final version of the analytic report on results of VAW court monitoring. The major findings of the report are that women do not have access to justice through the current discriminatory legislation, mentality of the judges and the social as well as the family pressure of victims of domestic violence to withdraw their law-suits. Upon that only in few cases did the public prosecutor pursue the public interest right and pursued the case; hence giving women who had the courage to report on such crimes and pursue law suits that the judiciary system would not provide redress, and hence discourage those women and others from accessing the justice system.

2.2 Women rights violations in Palestine are exposed and addressed

2.2.1 Document 600 cases of human rights violations against Palestinian women in the West Bank (including Jerusalem) and in the Gaza Strip

During 2021, WCLAC documented 120 testimonies from Palestinian women in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem on the impact of Israeli violations to IHL and IHRL on their lives. In specific, the testimonies reflected the gendered impact of Israeli occupation violations on women and girls in different areas (such as H2 in Hebron, Area C, Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan). The violations mainly focused on settlers and soldiers violence and their impact on Palestinian women, , house demolition, forced displacement in East Jerusalem neighborhoods and northern Jordan Valley areas, latest military aggression on the Gaza strip, restriction on movement, and access to health and education. These testimonies were then analyzed and reflected in reports and submission submitted to different UN Special Rapporteurs and statement submitted and presented to Human Rights Council, which we will elaborate more in subsequent sections of this report.

Moreover, WCLAC issued 11 monthly [Bulletins](#), also in April 2021, WCLAC jointly with the Palestinian NGO Forum to Combat Violence Against Women (Al-Muntada) submitted a [report](#) on Femicide in the Palestinian Society to the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Ms. Dbravka Simonovic. Finally, on May 27th WCLAC made a [Call for Action](#): HRC 30th Special Session - Call on the United Nations Human Rights Council to adopt a resolution on the grave human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and in Israel.

2.2.2 Mobilize civil society organizations, solidarity groups and women's organizations in a number of countries shed light on gendered impact of the occupation in their respective countries and organizations

(Hold 10 presentations to visiting delegations of MPs and solidarity groups (War Child

In 2021, and due to COVID-19 and restrictions of movement WCLAC conducted one presentation to visiting delegation from the OHCHR office in H2 area in Hebron, in the area of Tel Rumeida. During the field visit, WCLAC and the OHCHR visited the house of one of WCLAC's field researchers living in Tel Rumeida. The field researcher discussed the general escalation of violence by settlers and soldiers on H2 area citizens, during the first quarter of 2021. She also shared her personal story from her daily life living under the Israeli occupation, as the Israeli forces has recently declared

her house a closed military zone on 1st of February 2021. Moreover, the field researcher shared testimonies on the gendered-impact of Israeli discriminatory policies and IHL violations on women and girls living in H2 area.

The visit also highlighted the massive deterioration of human rights situation in H2 area, including lack of access to health services, lack of access to education and schools, settlers' violence incidents and its impact on women and girls' right to movement, challenges facing women including the gender-based violence (GBV), harassments by soldiers at checkpoints and obstacles to accessing different services. The visit was organized by the OHCHR office in coordination with WCLAC and its field researcher.

2.2.3 Produce reports, reports and debriefings on gendered impact of the occupation

WCLAC continued its analyses on the testimonies documented from women on the gendered impact of the Israeli occupation and presented them to different UN procedures. In 2021, WCLAC submitted three submissions to UN Special Rapporteurs on the gendered-impact of Israel's settlement activity and settler violence on Palestinian women and girls in the oPt. WCLAC also submitted another submission on the impact of Israeli forces recent violence against women peaceful protestors and journalists in response to the forcible displacement and house eviction orders campaigns in Sheikh Jarrah as well as the Palestinian forces' violence against human rights defenders and protesters against the killing of the activist Nizar Bannat.

(Present reports based on evidence-based data to relevant UN committees (3 reports per year

In 2021, WCLAC submitted 3 reports to different UN procedures on the gendered impact of Israeli occupation. The first submission was submitted on April 30th on the gendered-impact of Israel's settlement activity and settler violence on Palestinian women and girls in the oPt, to the Special Rapporteur on the situation in the oPt.

The second submission was submitted on July 31st, to the Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association. It tackled the Israeli forces' recent violence against women peaceful protestors and journalists in response to the forcible displacement and house eviction orders campaigns in Sheikh Jarrah. In addition to addressing the Palestinian Security Forces brutal repression of peaceful protesters particularly women and human rights defenders in the protests held against the killing of a Palestinian activist, Nizar Banat.

Furthermore, on November 24th, WCLAC organized a consultation session in Ramallah to present the list of issues delivered by the CESCR on the initial report of the state of Palestine, which were discussed with Al-Muntada, the General Union of Palestinian Women, and Amal Coalition in Gaza via Zoom. The session aimed to discuss the next steps that will be followed by civil society organizations, as well as their contribution to the parallel report, and how will they respond to the committee's inquiries. WCLAC emphasized on the responsibility of the State party to respond to all the questions and issues raised in the list of issues. In addition to the need to ask the official authorities and relevant ministries to consult with civil society and women's organizations through holding national consultation sessions. Additionally, Al-Muntada member organizations and other participants stressed on the need to inform the Covenant Committee on the developments since the submission of the shadow report, as well as to include new information and data, to refute the report of the State of Palestine.

As a result, the participants indicated that the main challenge stems from a political system based on inequality in all rights, whether economic, social or cultural. Accordingly, it was agreed to invite the Palestinian official authorities to have a dialogue, to evaluate and discuss the responses

provided by the State of Palestine.

After submitting the parallel report to the Committee WCLAC and Al Muntada attended the virtual 69th session/pre-session of the CESCR Committee. WCLAC and Al Muntada member organizations of Bisan Centre for Research and Development and Qader for Community Development presented three oral statements to the Committee emphasizing recommendations that were set forth in the parallel report.⁹⁶

(Issue urgent appeals when relevant (Depends when opportunity arises)

During this year, WCLAC submitted two urgent appeals; the first one was on the ongoing Denial to Access Healthcare Services for Palestinian Patients from the Gaza Strip and the second was on the critical need to immediately release a nine-month pregnant Palestinian women detainee, Anhar Al-Deek from Israeli Prisons.

WCLAC also issued an urgent appeal addressed the ongoing Denial to Access Healthcare Services for Palestinian Patients from the Gaza Strip. It was directed to (5) relevant Special Rapporteurs (The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Mr. S. Michael Lynk; The Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Mr. Dainius Pūras; The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic; The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, Ms. E. Tendayi Achiume; The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, Mr. Juan E. Méndez). The urgent appeal included (4) testimonies collected by WCLAC's field researchers; (3) patients in critical need of treatment are women, and a 14-month year old child. Through these appeals WCLAC provided an overview and a legal analysis of these cases and urged the relevant UN Special Procedures- among other things- to exert pressure on Israel to comply with its legal obligation towards the oPt to provide adequate medical care.

2.2.4 Shed light on gendered impact of the occupation through attended UN sessions

Attend CSW sessions and carry out parallel events virtually

During 2021, WCLAC participated in 3 CSW65 parallel events. During the first one, WCLAC participated in the Solidarity Is Global Institute- Jordan (SIGI) CSW65 parallel event, the event reviewed and discussed regional experiences on "Social protection for vulnerable women during crisis".

The second parallel event was organized by Feminist Alliance for Rights (FAR) on "State violence against women protesting femicide and other forms of GBV" where WCLAC had an oral intervention.

WCLAC also participated in Karama Women's Network conference on "Women in Leadership in Law, Politics, and Peace" as part the CSW65 parallel events. The conference looked at the state of legal and constitutional reform in the region, with particular consideration to progress toward eliminating violence against women, and the impact of COVID-19. Looking toward democratic processes, the conference will consider the challenges of ensuring that women and youth are able to participate and be represented, and the particular issues faced in countries that are experiencing conflict, occupation, and transition

⁹⁶ http://www.wclac.org/Library/212/NGO_Parallel_Report_to_the_Initial_Report_of_the_State_of_Palestine

(Attend relevant UN sessions (Human Rights Council

During this reporting period, WCLAC participated virtually in the two HRC sessions the 46th session (22 February- 23 March) and 47th session (15 June- 22 July).

Under the 46th session WCLAC delivered three oral statements under agenda item 2, agenda item 7, and agenda item 3. The oral statements reflected the gendered impact of Israeli occupation on women and girls amid COVID-19.

On February 24th, WCLAC delivered the first statement through video during the Interactive Dialogue under item 2. The oral statement urged the council and state parties to hold Israel accountable for the gendered impact of their systematic discriminatory policies amid COVID-19, and to end their illegal practices, including restriction of movement, denial of healthcare access, land theft, and house demolition in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

Link: [UN Live United Nations Web TV - Search Results for "ID item 2" - ID: High Commissioner report on oPt \(Cont'd\) - 9th Meeting, 46th Regular Session Human Rights Council](#)

On March 3rd, WCLAC delivered another statement through video during the Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on human rights and environment under item 3. During the oral intervention, WCLAC emphasized the gendered impact of Israeli environmental violations on women in the West Bank, Gaza strip, and East Jerusalem, with a focus on access to safe agricultural lands, water, and adequate standard of living.

Link: [UN Live United Nations Web TV - Search Results for "ID item 3" - ID: SR on Sustainable Environment \(Cont'd\) - 21st Meeting, 46th Regular Session Human Rights Council](#)

On March 18th, WCLAC delivered the third statement by video during the General Debate on item 7 regarding the Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, including on HC/SG reports. During the oral intervention, WCLAC addressed the escalated gendered impact of settlers' violence on women and girls.

Link: [UN Live United Nations Web TV - Search Results for "18 March 2021" - Item:7 General Debate - 41st Meeting, 46th Regular Session Human Rights Council](#)

Moreover, WCLAC participated in a side event - online meeting in parallel to the Human Rights Council 46th session with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Physical and Mental Health Mrs. Tlaleng Mofokend as a main speaker. The event was initiated by Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. WCLAC Director of Programs presented a statement on "The Impact of Israeli Policies on Women and Girls in the Context of the Pandemic". The statement emphasized that COVID-19 has placed an enormous stress on the Palestinian health care system, which was already significantly weakened and undermined by decades of Israeli occupation and systematic oppression. The statement stressed that Israel as an occupying power has a general responsibility under international human rights conventions for the safety, welfare and human rights protection of Palestinian children living in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Link: <https://cihrs.org/the-46th-session-of-the-united-nations-human-rights-council/?lang=en>

As for the 47th HRC Session which took place virtually between June 15th – July 22nd, WCLAC held an Oral statement under item 7; Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the oPt. WILPF joined WCLAC's statement. This statement addressed the continuous Israel's repression and persecution of human rights defenders and CSOs, home demolitions, women were terrorized by the massive settler violence, women journalists, protesters and residents have been subjected to physical and verbal abuse by the Israeli police and settlers. The statement urged the Human Rights Council to ensure gendered impacts are investigated and

addressed, recommend an immediate and comprehensive arms embargo. In addition to urge all parties to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and strengthen scrutiny of all companies that benefit from the occupation.

In addition, WCLAC joined an oral statement that was presented by WILPF, where both organizations ensured their support the creation of a Commission of Inquiry to address the root causes of systemic discrimination and the violations of human rights. The statement addressed the illegal annexation of Palestinian land, the 14-year-long blockade imposed on Gaza, institutionalised discrimination, the bombing of populated areas has devastated the lives of Palestinians. The apartheid system results in crimes against humanity and violations of the human rights, and Women and girls are differently and disproportionately impacted. The statement urged all States to dis-engage from all activities with Israel which may render them complicit, or otherwise contributing, to serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, or the commission of international crimes; and take effective measures to end Israel's impunity, and to support international accountability measures including the ICC investigation and the annual updating of the UN Database.

It's also worth mentioning that WCLAC also joined 4 joint oral interventions held by (Al Mezan, Cairo institute, Al Haq, and MIFTAH) on item 7, 3.

WCLAC also had an oral intervention to the UN Security Council during a Closed Session on the Aggression on Gaza Strip, Sheikh Jarrah, the West Bank and Occupied Jerusalem. WCLAC participated in the informal meeting with all members of the NGO working group on WPS, the closed session was on the aggression on the Gaza Strip, Sheikh Jarrah and the rest of the West Bank and occupied Jerusalem. WCLAC's General Director presented an oral statement. The statement focused on Forced dispossession/ displacement in Sheikh Jarrah, & Arms Embargo. During the statement the General Director called on SC members to put an end to the culture of impunity enjoyed by Israel and ensure that it adheres to its obligations under the UN charter and international law, adopt a just and durable solution to the occupation; otherwise, Israeli apartheid regime will continue to balloon a longer list of violations.

Moreover, WCLAC participated in the 30th special session of the Human Rights Council on the grave human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem - On May 27th, The Human Right Council opened its special session on "the grave human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem". It heard calls from speakers for the Council to establish an independent, international, independent Commission of Inquiry to investigate in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021.

Speakers urged the Council to include the crime against humanity of apartheid in its investigations, & that the Council should take decisive actions towards ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including through dispatching a Commission of Inquiry. Also, urging the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, speakers condemned Israel's continued attacks against the Gaza Strip, and urged the international community to put an end to the massacres committed by Israel. They also called that the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected and the right to worship upheld.

Furthermore, WCLAC participated with an oral intervention in the 30th special session of the Human Rights Council. During this session, WCLAC anticipated presenting the statement by one of the women, whom we supported through coaching while preparing the oral statement and delivering the oral statement. The intervention was presented by Noor Swirki, a woman from Gaza who presented her testimony as a right holder amid Israel's aggression on Gaza, and

highlighted the gendered impact of the Israeli military offensive and Israel's apartheid regime on women, particularly women living in the Gaza strip. Following the special session, the Human Rights Council passed a resolution in favor of establishing a commission of inquiry in the oPt to investigate in all Israel's IHL and IHRL violations, including underlying root causes of the situation, and Israel's settler colonialism and apartheid regime over Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line.

Finally on May 31st, WCLAC submitted a joint written statement with MIFTAH and JLAC, addressing the gendered impact of the latest escalation of Israel's IHL violations on Palestinian women and girls, through lived testimonies from women in Sheikh Jarrah and Gaza. Through the submitted statement, WCLAC urged the Council to take immediate measures abiding by its legal and moral obligations to protect the Palestinian people as a whole. Hence, WCLAC urged the Council's members to support and facilitate the Commission of Inquiry to investigate in all Israel's violations against the Palestinian people as a whole. The statement also highlighted the urgency to adopt a gender-responsive approach in all deliberations about the occupied Palestinian territories in order to explicitly address the gendered impacts of the occupation in all relevant resolutions, with special attention to the promotion and protection of human rights of Palestinian women and girls, and take measures to address the repercussions of occupation.

On September 17th, WCLAC submitted an Oral intervention on item 3 Interactive dialogue on the analytical report of the High Commissioner on the current state of play of the mainstreaming of the human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. The submission addressed the current structural inequalities and gendered- based discrimination in Palestine that exist on two fronts, that of the Israeli occupation and that of the patriarchy within Palestinian communities. WCLAC called on the HRC and the human rights High Commissioner to:

- Activate the existing justice and accountability measures to hold Israeli perpetrators accountable and ensure that survivors of structural gendered-based discrimination get access to justice.
- End to the culture of impunity enjoyed by Israel and ensure that it adheres to its obligations under the UN charter and article 11 of UNSCR 1325 that "emphasizes the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls".

It should be mentioned that WCLAC joined 3 joint statements submitted by (AL Haq, Al Mezan, and CIHRS) on item 7. WCLAC also joined Al Haq joint oral statement on item 4 on the situation of Beita. Additionally, WCLAC joined Al Haq joint oral statement on item 3 on arbitrary detention.

Furthermore, in September 2021, WCLAC endorsed a joint letter issued by Gisha NGO that was sent to the missions of the African Group at the UN Human Rights Council during the 48th Regular Session of the HRC. It will be published and sent around with the list of endorsing organizations. In light of the increased international recognition and Israel's continued entrenchment of apartheid, the letter calls on several recommendations to the attention of the African states.

Moreover, WCLAC endorsed a joint oral statement that was delivered at the 48th session of the Human Rights Council. The statement emphasized abortion rights, in support of the International Safe Abortion Day. The statement was initiated by the Sexual Rights Initiative, the Center for Reproductive Rights, the Association for Women's Rights in Development, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Ipas, the International Service for Human Rights, Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, and the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education have developed a joint statement on abortion rights for delivery at the 48th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

On October 1st, WCLAC submitted an oral intervention on item 7 General debate on the High Commissioner report on water resources in the oPt. During the submission, WCLAC focused on the water confiscation and limitation enforced by the Israeli authorities on the Northern Jordan Valley area. The Oral intervention included women testimonies from that area who are directly impacted by the lack of water in the Jordan valley. The main gendered- impact on women and girls is mainly their sanitation, health rights as well as adequate standards of living including having clean, portable water for everyday use⁹⁷.

2.2.5 Attend events on Beijing +25 platform of actions to advance realizing of the platform within the Palestinian context

Within the framework of 25th anniversary of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its adaptation by the State of Palestine, WCLAC and MIFTAH have developed a **national-level review assessment report for implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by the Palestinian state**. This report was presented as additional information on the situation in Palestine regarding compliance with and enforcement of the practice of women's rights, their empowerment and achievement of gender equality. WCLAC used this report as an advocacy tool during the events related to Beijing+25 Declaration and Platform of Action. Starting from the virtual convention of the 65th session of the Commission of the Status of Women in March 2021, where WCLAC and MIFTAH organized two virtual events on two main themes addressed in the follow up report and which are also the themes of CSW this year: namely leadership and meaningful participation and gender-based violence. Which was addressed in the context of the daily lives of Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli colonial occupation and structured patriarchy. WCLAC and MIFTAH will engage in other activities and advocacy initiatives related to the Beijing+25 Declaration and Platform of Action convening in Mexico and Paris and will join efforts with feminist human rights organizations in Palestine and the MENA region to highlight the gender inequalities of Palestinian and Arab women in our region.

On February 3rd 2021, WCLAC and MIFTAH launched their joint **Beijing+25 CSO Follow up Report of Palestine** which is based on consultations with civil society and women's organizations. The report complemented the work and efforts made by the General Union of Palestinian Women, which worked closely with all civil society organizations (CSOs) in preparing the Palestinian National Report that was coordinated by the Ministry of the Women's Affairs (MOWA), Prime Ministers' Office and by the GUPW. The follow up report specifically addressed the six issues highlighted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In its first section it addressed priorities, challenges and setbacks during the past five years, followed by progress made across the six critical areas of concern. In the third section, the follow up report discussed actions made to address the issue of freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes, then moved to the meaningful participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions, including the governments' responses to gender sensitive strategies, action plans and their obligations to take measures in order to meet their legal obligations under international law, namely the recommendations and concluding remarks of the CEDAW Committee. It further addressed whether any measures were undertaken to harmonize Palestinian discriminatory policies and legislation with CEDAW and other international human rights standards. Then the follow up report discussed the progress made on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) during the past five years and the role of women in decision-making processes and peace-building within the Palestinian context of the prolonged military occupation and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also highlighted the progress or action made

⁹⁷ <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1m/k1mcl64lx8>

within the last five years to build and sustain peace and security, especially after the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the adoption of the first-generation National Action Plan (NAP). It also addressed if there were any measures taken to address gender inequalities and eliminate discrimination against women. Finally, the report addressed the environmental component through a gender lens, by addressing if there were any environmental policies adopted by the Palestinian government and how being under Israeli occupation negatively impacts the environmental rights of women and girls in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Moreover, WCLAC has launched a **media campaign aiming at informing the public about the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its adaptation by the State of Palestine**. In addition to highlighting the main findings and conclusions of the national-level review assessment report for implementing by the Palestinian state.

2.2.6 Build capacities of women from Area C and near the Wall to present their stories on impact of Israeli violations on their rights to international delegations and other international platforms

Conduct three annual visits for marginalized areas

During this reporting period, WCLAC held 3 annual visits for marginalized areas. Two of them were to H2 area and the other one was to the northern Jordan valley.

On October 16th, WCLAC conducted an annual field visit to one of the marginalized areas in the Old City of Hebron (H2 area), along with Fayzeh Abu Shamsiyeh, one of WCLAC's field researchers in Hebron. During the visit, WCLAC interviewed 4 women in Jaber neighborhood, which is surrounded by Israeli checkpoints that consists of concrete roadblocks affecting every aspect of the lives of Palestinians living in this area; especially women. The neighborhood is completely isolated due to the checkpoint, which prevents residents of Jaber's to access other nearby neighborhoods, and prevents access to the eastern side compound of Al-Haram Al Ibrahimi. Nevertheless, Israeli settlers that are protected by Israeli soldiers constantly vandalize the area with complete impunity. WCLAC collected evidence-based data and testimonies from women living in Jaber's neighborhood. The testimonies indicated a pattern of systematic settler violence on all residents including youngsters, children, women, men and the elderly. Interviewed women testified direct attacks against them and their children by settlers passing the neighborhood roads, which is an indication of the discriminatory policies and lack of protection in this area. WCLAC recorded and filmed some of the women's testimonies upon their consent to keep their records confidential.

Select 3 out of 10 women from friction areas to participate in meetings with international delegations

WCLAC is currently in the process of selecting 10 women as right holders from different areas (Jordan Valley, East Jerusalem, area c, and Gaza) to coach/support them on presenting their stories in UN sessions in NY and other international fora.

The fieldwork coordinator developed a criterion for the 10 women, which includes type of violation, and different geographical scope, age, as well as how to reflect the gendered-impact of violations while telling the story using evidence based-data and international law as right holders not victims.

On December 20th, WCLAC carried out a coaching session in Tubas Charity Association for women and girls from the Northern Jordan valley. WCLAC targeted high school and university girls' students

living in Khirbet Makhoul. During the coaching session the participants shared their testimonies after training them on right-based approach advocacy mechanisms. The training aimed at strengthening the girls' ability to present their stories as right holders in front of international forums by introducing them to the core principles of human rights law and humanitarian law, the history of human rights and the main human rights violations that are constantly violated in the Jordan valley area. The training aimed to bridge the gap between practice and theory of human rights and humanitarian law in order to be able to analyze their stories from a right-based approach. It should be mentioned that the 10 girls who participated in the training and are willing to continue the trainings session in 2022

Select three women being exposed to coaching to participate in advocacy trips and present their stories in side event at the UN and HRC

Nour Swirki, a journalist from Gaza was coached to share her story during an Oral Intervention in the (30th special session of the Human Rights Council on the grave human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem). Nour proudly represented Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling, to voice the Palestinian Gazan women in light of the recent aggression on Gaza.

Reem Hammad, an activist from Sheikh Jarrah is also one of the women right holders who is being trained to present her story to international delegations. On the 16th of July, Reem participated along with WCLAC in a podcast with WILPF MENA program. The podcast episode was on the impact of the warfare on women and girls in the Opts, the richness of the Palestinian feminist movement, and the journey towards feminist peace including the challenges, spaces, and tactics for feminist struggle/resistance. Reem shared her experience during the latest events in sheikh Jarrah.

2.2.7 Provide coaching sessions for field workers who document IHL violations

On-the-job training for field workers and accompanying them in the field (12 times a year)

On April 28th, WCLAC paid a field visit to the Northern Jordan Valley areas along with the field work coordinator and staff from Tubas Charity Association. The visited areas were Al-Maleh, Ein al-Beida, Tyaseer, and Kardaleh. The field visit aimed at collecting testimonies of Israeli violations these areas undergo, with a specific focus on the gendered impact on Palestinian women, and the visit aim at having an on-the-job training for the field worker. The documented violations are mainly but not merely resembled in demolition of agricultural structures and water resources, tent demolitions for the Bedouin community, and threats of house demolitions. Four testimonies were collected and documented by video. Through them, women have expressed their constant fear over losing their land and house, and the inability to work on the land due to harassments by the Israeli soldiers. For many, these lands are the only source of income, thus are struggling financially. A main shared concern all interviewed families voiced is the possible annexations of the Jordan Valley. Such testimonies are usually used in WCLAC's written and oral statements to the UN's sessions with relevance to the situation in Palestine.

On October 25th, WCLAC carried out a field visit to Northern Jordan Valley –specifically to Khirbet Makhoul, along with one of the field researchers; Nadwa Barghouthi. During the visit, the field researcher received an on-job-training on how to video document testimonies, how and when to use different documentation methods to generate a gender specific documentation. WCLAC and the field researcher also documented testimonies of women during the visit and walked through the area where women showed WCLAC team and field worker how settlers attack their livestock, and another woman described how she and her 3-month-old baby were arrested for 7 hours for a

false accusation of “throwing stones at settlers”.

On November 8th, WCLAC carried out another field visit to the Northern Jordan Valley, in particular to Khirbet Em-Ijmal, where tent and other private property demolition had occurred earlier that morning. During the field visit, one of WCLAC field researchers, Nawal Taha, received an on-job-training on how to measure the impact of “monitoring the effect of tent demolition on women of the Jordan Valley”. WCLAC also visited Ein-El-Hilweh Spring, to document via pictures and videos the transformation of the area after the settlers illegally built a park around it to claim ownership, exclude any Palestinian presence, and prevent them from using the natural water resource. While there, another violation was taking place, and young women were present in the area. Accordingly, WCLAC and its field researcher interviewed the two women. Both of these women are from Khirbet El-Maleh, they suffer from settler-violence, shortage of water and electricity, as well as threat of demolition as part of annexation policies.

Work intensively with the fieldwork coordinator to improve her skills

In the first six months of 2021, WCLAC conducted the first introductory meeting for field work researchers via zoom due to the lockdown in March and as preventive measure of Covid—19 spread. The meeting aimed at revising the tools and mechanisms of documentation IHL violations, the core goal of documentation in line with the action plan, discussing previous challenges in the documentation process including collecting the evidence based- data amid Covid 19. The meeting also tackled themes we are focusing on during the year, mainly documenting the gendered impact of annexation, house demolition, punitive measures, Access to education and settlers’ violence in area C, checkpoints and access to health in Gaza Strip.

During the meeting, the documentation plan for 2021 was presented and the fieldwork researchers’ roles was divided according to the geographical distribution of cases in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, taking into account the impact of the pandemic and its psychological, economic and health impact on women.

The themes included:

1. An in-depth discussion regarding the gendered impact of settler violence on Palestinian women and its impact on the residents of Area C, such as the Old City of Hebron, especially with regard to impeding girls’ access to education. Also an in-depth discussion regarding the vital need to focus on documenting settler violence against women in the west bank villages such as Kafr Malik, Al Mughayr, Bourin and Qusra, and impediment of access to agricultural lands.
2. IHL violations related to checkpoints, impeding access to health care for women and girls from Gaza strip and girls in need to access Jerusalem and Israeli hospitals especially in light of the pandemic and the recent Israeli aggression on the Gaza strip.
3. All forms of annexation and its impact on women
4. Punitive measures in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza and its impact on women.
5. House demolitions, forced displacement, and its impact on women in East Jerusalem.
6. Confiscation of tents and barracks in small residential communities, which are threatened with, forced displacement, such as Khirbet Homsa al-Fawqa in the Jordan Valley.
7. The meeting was concluded with recommendations and suggestions by fieldwork researchers and the field work coordinator and the director of advocacy to find ways to improve the documentation process in light the existing hurdles.

On March 29th, WCLAC held a coaching session via zoom for new field work researchers on documentation and monitoring IHL violations followed by presenting case studies and a presentation on WCLAC's documentation mechanisms. Moreover, on May 22nd WCLAC held a coaching session for all field work researchers on documentation and monitoring mechanisms and challenges in emergency situations such as in the aftermath of Israel's aggression on Gaza and Israel's attacks on peaceful protesters against forced expulsion and displacement in Sheikh Jarrah and nearby neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. We accommodated the documentation action plan in line with the de facto situation.

Finally, WCLAC developed a ToR to facilitate the mission of field work researchers in Gaza in documenting the impact of the aggression on women's lives, particularly women who lost family members or women who lost their homes and source of income (from a physiological, security, health and economic aspect).

2.2.8 Strengthen the capacity of CSOs to document gendered impact of violations of IHL and IHRL and adhere to Core Humanitarian Standards

Between November 28th and December 15th 2021, WCLAC carried out two specialized trainings that aimed at building the capacities of 40 General Union of Palestinian Women members and young men from the Southern and Northern branches. The main aim of this training was to develop the capacities of young women and men to promote and advocate for the WPS agenda as well as to monitor and document impact of Israeli violations to IHL and IHRL on women.

The first training focused on gender and women's rights, gender-based violence, women's rights in Palestinian laws, Palestinian procedures, and in particular the Personal Status Law and the Family Protection Bill, monitoring and documentation of Israeli violations, treaty and non-treaty bodies within the United Nations system, and Security Council Resolution 1325, Peace and Security Agenda and its relationship to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women.

The second training discussed Human rights law: a historical overview, characteristics of human rights, the three generations of human rights and their development, an exercise on the ICCPR and ICESCR and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the difference between Human rights law and Humanitarian law, examples on the impact of humanitarian law violations on women and their intersectionality with humanitarian law violations in the context of the occupation. Additionally, the training also focused on the mechanisms of Monitoring and documentation from a gender –sensitive perspective, WCLAC's mechanisms in documenting women voices and the impact of Israeli violations on women and girls, main themes documented by WCLAC's fieldworkers, treaty and non-treaty mechanisms, exercise on CEDAW articles from 1-16 and finally case studies that reflect the gendered impact of Israeli violations on women and girls and its intersectionality with Human rights law and humanitarian law.

Develop capacities of women activists and young men and women to promote and advocate for the WPS agenda (5 training days, 25 young women)

WCLAC conducted a specialized training in Hebron between November 28th – December 8th that aimed at building the capacities of 15 GUPW members of the Southern branches to promote and advocate for the WPS agenda. The training covered several topics, including gender and women's rights, gender-based violence, women's rights in Palestinian laws, Palestinian procedures, and in particular the Personal Status Law and the Family Protection Bill, monitoring and documentation of Israeli violations, treaty and non-treaty bodies within the United Nations system, and Security Council Resolution 1325, Peace and Security Agenda and its relationship to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women.

According to the pre and post analysis, before the training only 7% knew the difference between contractual and non-contractual mechanisms, 7% know the articles within CEDAW and the discriminatory articles within the applied laws. Additionally, only 14% of the participants had previous knowledge about tools of documentation and 17% are familiar with the topic of discrimination against women in the Personal Status Law. 93% explained that this is the first time they are introduced to CEDAW and the discrimination within the Palestinian procedures. 93% are able to differentiate between contractual and non-contractual mechanisms and how member states are accountable. 86% expressed that after the training they can document and monitor violations from a gender perspective. 83% consider that this the first time they are introduced to the topic of discrimination against women in the Personal Status Law.

Finally, the participants pointed out the importance of such trainings at both personal and societal levels, as it contributes towards increasing the knowledge of the different groups of society, especially young females and males regarding the discussed topics. This leads to enhancing societal change by creating a healthier society with the contribution of the young people who have increased their awareness on women's rights and opposes violence against women and follow up on enhancing their knowledge.

Build capacities of women activists and young men and women to monitor and document impact of Israeli violations to IHL and IHRL on women (25 women, 5 training days)

Between December 7th -15th WCLAC carried out four-days trainings attended by 25 members (6 males, 19 females) between the age of 20 -50 years old from GUPW's branches in the Northern West Bank. The main aim of this training was to promote and advocate for the WPS agenda with specific focus on accountability. The introduced participants to Human rights law: a historical overview, characteristics of human rights, the three generations of human rights and their development. The participants were also exposed to several practical exercises to introduce the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Specific emphasis was made on the difference between Human rights law and Humanitarian law, examples on the impact of humanitarian law violations on women and their intersectionality with humanitarian law violations in the context of the occupation. Additionally, the training focused on the mechanisms of monitoring and documentation of IHLS violations using a gender –sensitive approach, WCLAC's mechanisms in documenting women voices and the impact of Israeli violations on women and girls. The training also introduced treaty and non-treaty mechanisms, through a practical exercise on CEDAW articles from 1-16 and finally case studies that reflect the gendered impact of Israeli violations on women and girls and its intersectionality with Human rights law and humanitarian law.

According to the pre and post analysis, before the training 100% of the participants were not familiar with the contractual mechanisms and it is related to the accountability of member states, 100% didn't know the constrains of documenting IHL violations from gender perspective, only 4% were familiar with the documentation tools, and 12% know the difference between IHL and IHRL. 96% of the participants agreed that the training helped them in being introduced to the contractual mechanisms and it is related to the accountability of member states. 96% agreed that the inability of women in expressing the impact of rights violations under IHL and IHRL is the main constrain of documenting human rights violations from a gender perspective. Moreover, 88% explained that they can differentiate between IHL and IHRL

2.3. Women's position in the media is improved from a gender perspective

.3.1 Follow-up, document and analyse women's image in the media from a gender perspective

In March 2019, WCLAC contributed to the edition of This Week in Palestine Magazine, by writing an article on Economic Independence: [Achieving Independence- Women's Entrepreneurship](#). As well as, contributing to May's edition by writing an article on the importance of Advocacy from a feminist perspective [Feminist Advocacy](#).

Develop the Arabic and English website

During the reporting period, WCLAC has managed to update its website and Facebook pages. As for the website, WCLAC has new programming to become more user friendly. Regarding Facebook, the updates included different WCLAC activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, follow up on the advocacy work, TV and radio interviews with WCLAC General Director and employees, articles written by WCLAC employees and different laws and news on women's issues. As for the Facebook's page engagement it is mainly focused on beneficiaries' inquiries related to the type of services we provide, and how they can reach us.

WCLAC's English language [website](#) continued to be active and regularly updated with new and original materials.

2.3.4 Carry out media and advocacy campaigns as necessary

During 2021, WCLAC continued carrying out a **media campaign** that has been launched lately in December 2020, which aimed to advocate for the **matrimonial rights** throughout TV program's episodes hosting relevant lawyers, women activist to further discuss the issue of Joint Marital Property and highlight the connection between the ownership of property with loans in accordance to the Palestinian Monetary Fund and the Land Registration Department. In addition, TV spots and video films were produced and broadcasted via social media, focusing on matrimonial rights and advocating for adopting new policies and procedures regulating joint marital property to highlight this issue to the public. This media campaign has been widely reached out to 98,532 people, thus most of the viewers were from the West- Bank (59%), as for the gender 69.2% of the viewers were males between the ages of 25-55 years old as for the females, they were around 30.8% of the viewers and between the ages of 18-45 years old. As for the film, it has been viewed by 11,000 people and reached 26,000 people. However, it has been viewed by mostly by males as they were 78% and the females were 22%. As for the 4 spots, they have reached 136,000 people and were viewed by 58,300 people. As for the viewers, 72% of them were males and the females were 28%.

WCLAC launched a media campaign aiming at advocating for the main findings and recommendations of the published thematic report entitled **"Towards a Fair and Gender Sensitive Civil Service Law"**. The media campaign consisted of TV spot, TV episode, infographic⁹⁸ and promotion of the media campaign on social media pages.

98 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Lmj5Xyonn0Am_VWl6Fv93gibJUoRX5OI?fbclid=IwAR13cpad5pYNI7dhku6y02fxpbS_55_8zIBEaucJxlCfvnCT3EBTTkkKPY

The TV episode ([watch here](#)) was recorded and published on Watan's Channel and Facebook page, with the participation of the following guests; Hiba Jibat, Director of Women's Affair at MOSA, Fathi Khader, Deputy of special administrations at General Personnel Council and Nabil Dwiekat, Research and Advocacy officer at WCLAC. The episode highlighted the importance of developing the Civil Service Law, which stems from the necessity of amending the existing legislations and adopting fair laws and regulations that respect gender equality in Palestine in accordance with the Palestinian Declaration of Independence and the Palestinian Basic Law and support women acquire leading positions in the Public Sector. This TV episode also emphasized that the adoption of such a Law will contribute to promoting Palestine's adherence to its commitments to international conventions and treaties it acceded to, mainly CEDAW and the covenants on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. A lively discussion was carried out during the episode among guests by addressing the general principles and ideas that should impact the current discussions until a new law that takes into account achieving gender equality and justice to support women's acquiring leading positions in the public sector. In addition, it has been ensured that the law also must meet international principles and conventions, and achieve the State of Palestine's commitments to international conventions it signed, including CEDAW. Moreover, the list of amendments of the civil service law considering gender equality that were presented in the study, were confirmed by representative of the General Personnel Council during the TV episode, which indicated that the number of women in leading positions is still very limited. As such the General Personnel Council is investing collective efforts to support and empower women to acquire leading positions.

In 2021, WCLAC has held several coordination meetings with Women Media & Development (TAM) to develop mutual messaging to be used in the media campaign. Additional meetings were also held with the Palestinian NGOs Against Domestic Violence Against Women (Al Muntada Coalition) to ensure that messages are agreed upon, given that Al Muntada is an umbrella of 17 women organizations.

During the meetings, messages and tools of the campaign were developed in order to reach the wider audience and to ensure exerting pressure on decision makers to adopt the law. The timeframe of the campaign and production of media material and its launch has also been set. WCLAC has developed a ToR specifying the main components of the campaign, which were sent out to media agencies during October 2021 based on WCLAC procurement procedures.

The campaign has been successfully launched during November 2021 around the 16 days of -of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

Based on procurement procedures and after reviewing all the tenders WCLAC contracted Nisaa FM local women radio station to lead on the media component. Nisaa radio station has a total audience of 350,000 listener and with 440,908 Facebook followers, which will be our target to reach throughout the campaign.

The various tools of the campaign included:

1. Production and broadcast of two radio episodes (each episode is 45 minutes long) on the Family Protection Bill which were carried out between 9 to 16 December 2021, as follows:
 - The first episode titled "The Family Protection Bill: the latest developments (Prospects and Challenges)", during which Sona Nassar the Legal Advisor at the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Sabah Salama the Coordinator of Al-Muntada coalition were hosted. The episode was also broadcasted via [SoundCloud](#) and [Facebook](#).
 - The second episode titled "Due diligence - legal and social justifications for the existence of the law and the official obligations of the state towards the law." During which, lawyer Rawan Obaid from WCLAC and Ms. Amal Khreisha from the Palestinian Working Women's Society for Development (PWWSD) were hosted. The episode was also broadcasted via [SoundCloud](#) and [Facebook](#).

2. Production and broadcasting of 2 Radio Spots on the Family Protection Bill. The spots will continue to be broadcasted from December 2021 through March 2022. After the end of the campaign we will receive a detailed report about the reach.
3. Promoting the media campaign on the radio's social networking pages, reaching 300,000 users, as the target groups were identified as follows: decision-makers in the Palestinian Authority, women's organizations, Palestinian ministries, human rights institutions, and society in general.

WCLAC has also supported Al-Muntada Coalition efforts to increase pressure on policy makers to adopt the Family Protection Bill. As such, during the Global 16 days of activism against gender-based violence Al-Muntada performed a sit-in protest in front of the Nablus Governorate with the participation of 30 people from member organizations (25 F and 5 M), during the Palestinian Cabinet weekly meeting, which was conducted at the premises Governorate. During this protest Al Muntada delivered a speech of Palestinian women's demands to adopt the Family Protection Bill, which was also handed over to the Minister of Women Affairs.

Strategic goal 3: Increased social responsibility of the Palestinian community towards women rights and elimination of discrimination against them

.1. Awareness of local communities on the elimination of discrimination³ and violence against women is increased

.1.1 Develop awareness raising material on GBV and women's social and legal³ rights through different media outlets

3.1.2 Develop skills of political parties, professionals, CBOs on women's rights and advocating for these rights

WCLAC continued its **raising awareness activities of local communities** on the elimination of discrimination and violence against women through building the capacity of 17 key decision-makers within the Justice and Security sector (10 Females and 7 Males), in cooperation of Mol.

During February, five intensive training sessions focused on the benefits of gender equality and women's roles in public life, including discussing the evidence around the importance of having women in decision-making and peacebuilding roles, and the importance of women in the justice and security sectors. As for analyzing trainees' pre-knowledge measures; 83% reported that they had a pre-knowledge about the training content; while 17% reported as new to training content and information, however, 17% out of the 83%; reported that the training was extremely effective, and 67% reported somewhat effective. Moreover, out of 17% who reported as new knowledge, distribution indicate; 17% reported that the training was extremely effective in adding new knowledge to their capacity.

WCLAC also, in cooperation with MoWA, has built the capacities of 15 (14 F, 1M) Champions and their activist networks/groups through conducting three mentoring sessions and five Training of Trainer sessions during February and March 2021. WCLAC has supported these Champions and their connected network to deliver peer-to-peer training and information sessions within their respective institutions, and building the capacity of Human Rights defenders, CSO and women's rights activists. Accordingly, four groups of the Champion carried out their peer-to-peer sessions with a close follow-up with both of WCLAC and an external consultant. These peer-to-peer sessions focused on women's political participation, in light with the Palestinian Legislative Council elections that have been supposedly held in May 2021. Finally, the champions of the Human Rights Defenders have successfully transferred their knowledge to their peers (4 peer-to-peer sessions), whereby a total of 65 feminist groups (and 1 Male) were targeted in Ein Arik, Ain Senia, Beetlo, and Kafr Aqab; ages ranged from 18 to 60 years old.

3.1.3 Develop skills of university students on identifying and combating discrimination against women

WCLAC decided to target female youth activists for self-support group, especially university students, even though the universities are in distant learning this will give the females the opportunity to participate. The idea of the self-help group and its implementation for a group of Al-Quds Open University students came in order to increase the students' sensitivity towards the phenomenon of gender-based violence and discrimination to increase the students' confidence in themselves by providing them with self-assertion skills. The meetings were coordinated through a university teaching assistant and supervisor Dr. Ramadan Abu Safia.

In April, 2021 WCLAC coordinated with a group of university students and young women in the Jerusalem area, Kafr Aqab, and Al-Ram to engage in self-help groups. A total of 10 students expressed their interest and commitment to participate in the self-support group. Participants were between the age of 20 -40 years old. Moreover, WCLAC managed to conduct two meetings on April 6th and April 13th during the month Ramadan. The two meetings focused on self-awareness and concepts related to gender-based awareness. The participants highlighted on the importance of these meetings and asked if we can complete the activity after Ramadan, especially that it was difficult to move around due to fasting, the tensions in the city and family obligations. WCLAC continued the other three meetings in May 2021. The last three meetings focused on the common perceptions of upbringing children in light of the culture of respect of others over ourselves and the culture of silence. Such cultural norms oblige us to accept issues such as violence, denies women from expressing their feelings, and deprive them from their basic human rights. The discussion introduced methods of increasing self-affirmation and how we should look at our capabilities. The discussion also focused on the impact of the person's upbringing in our culture on the ability of expressing themselves, ability to decide on their own behalf, and when and how to say (no). The types of self-awareness were also discussed and how to avoid aggressiveness. After the discussion a film on the types of self-awareness was presented. It is worth mentioning that different practical activities reflected during the discussion encouraged participant women to express themselves, learn more on personal boundaries and methods of emphasizing it, and ultimately, women were equipped with wide range of self-confidence tips.

3.1.4 Implement raising awareness campaigns to inform about rights, available protection and in still culture of reporting gendered corruption including sextortion

WCLAC has considered digital means to promote accountability of duty bearers is perceived as most relevant due to safety protocols used to prevent transmission of COVID-19. A digital campaign has been designed and implemented during the first half of 2021 to influence different duty bearers through accountability sessions and videos. Through engaging youth in accountability sessions, different duty bearers realized that women participation in the emergency response to COVID-19 pandemic is a national request that needs to be on their agenda. An online Campaign has been launched to amplify grassroots women voices with regards to their leadership role as community peace builders and community leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was followed by carrying out a series of virtual accountability sessions led by youth with Palestinian officials from relevant Ministries around women's participation in COVID-19 national response and decision making and other WPS related topics.

Despite limited political issues to engage women in the decision-making process during the emergency response to COVID-19, a significant number of women made remarkable achievements. These achievements were at the community and national levels through introducing innovative individual and collective efforts to respond to COVID-19. WCLAC perceived to feature grassroots women who might not be well known through the media or to the general public. Their stories are worth highlighting to inspire other women and to emphasize their role in responding to the impact of pandemic. Accordingly, features stories were developed about women leaders from local communities about their roles in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and promoting the agenda of women, security and peace in their communities.

The media campaign consisted of the following items; 3 infographics, 3 motion graphics, 3 radio spots (250 times each spot), 2TV episodes, 3 social media campaigns. It focused on the effects of corruption and its impact on the lives of Palestinian women and girls, in which it addressed the gendered impact of corruption in order to influence decision makers to adopt policies, legislation and control tools in order to eliminate this phenomenon of corruption in Palestinian society.

.2. Capacities of community members and grassroots women organizations on 3 women protection and empowerment are enhanced

3.2.1 Building the capacity of youth organizations adopt gender responsive and sensitive approach in their work and Form 2 local women's protection committees through them

WCLAC aimed at building partnerships with youth CBOs to mobilize youth; especially young men to engage in promoting and advocating for women's rights, which ultimately create agent of change in local communities. During 2021, WCLAC selected one local youth CBO in the governorates of Bethlehem to create social catalysts of change to promote women's rights.

WCLAC has carried out field visits to 5 youth CBOs in the Bethlehem governorate, and met with the directors of these institutions. Additionally, 3 over-the-phone assessments with 3 CBOs were also carried out. Following the assessments, the eligibility and ability of these institutions to cooperate in the implementation of activities and their ability to advance the project's objectives were analyzed.

The selection criteria that WCLAC developed included that it should be an active youth organization that serves its local community; an independent CBO with no political affiliation; legally registered for more than two years; it has been operating in the field of service for more than one year; it is credible and has a good reputation, and has partnerships with official and civil society institutions; has an elected and effective official administrative body; it is willing to build a strategic partnership with WCLAC and contribute to the implementation of joint programs; It respects women's rights, and shares WCLAC's values of respecting human rights and incorporates Human Rights-based approach in designing and implementing its programs and it has premises that is suitable for carrying out related activities.

Moreover, WCLAC conducted a coordination meeting with the Higher Council for Youth and sport to discuss the project's framework and the selection criteria and process of the youth CBOs in Bethlehem. In October 2021, WCLAC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Nibras.

WCLAC hired a specialized consultant to support Nibras in developing their organization's strategic action plan while ensuring gender mainstreaming. The consultant held three intensive meetings with the staff of Nibras with an aim to collect information and analyze the existing situation and develop a strategic plan document that reflects the youth organization's interventions with special focus on gender issues.

The strategic plan was finalized, which will provide strategic direction to Nibras youth CBO while developing and implementing different programs aiming at empowering women in their community and promoting their rights.

Following the successful selection of the youth CBO, Nibras for Young Generation Society, and as part of their role in promoting women's rights within their communities, the CBO, in cooperation and supervision by WCLAC, has created a local youth protection committee comprising of 10 youth (5 females and 5 males).

The main purpose of this committee was discussed with its members who expressed their interest in monitor and create early detection mechanisms in their community to detect cases of SGBV. The committee members; especially male members expressed their commitment to become champions of change in their community and to work with other men to increase their awareness and engage them in the process of detecting and preventing GBV.

The protection committee has been established and trained on gender-based violence, women's rights and protection mechanisms. The protection committee conducted 10 awareness raising sessions for men in the community to raise their awareness on gender-based violence and women's rights.

Three meetings were conducted aimed at assessing the needs and priorities of members of the protection committee. Accordingly, WCLAC has provided a specialized training to the local Youth's Protection Committee (established by Nibras) with an aim to strengthen the capacities of youth institutions in detection of gender violence, which was provided by WCLAC's social worker and lawyer. The training focused on the concept of violence, its causes, types, forms and consequences, the concept of intervention with women victims of violence, counseling skills, and the resort of victims of violence to seek help in cases of violence, intervention and referral mechanisms and types of protection, as well as the relationship between human rights and gender-based violence, in addition to methods of working with groups, time management, discussion and effective communication mechanisms.

The training targeted 11 members of the newly established youth protection committee between the age of 18 -55 years old (6 females and 5 males). According to the pre assessment 73% of the participants can facilitate groups affectively, 82% didn't know the real role of the facilitator, 82% didn't have previous knowledge about the National Referral System, 64% didn't know about the role of the protection committees and 91% had previous knowledge on the mechanisms of protecting women. As for the post assessment 100% of the participants reported that they can facilitate groups affectively, 100% know the real role of the facilitator, 100% became aware of the mechanisms of protecting women as well as the roles of stakeholders, 100% became aware of the role of the protection committees and 100% are aware of the National Referral System.

3.2.2 Develop the skills of Sharia lawyer trainees on court procedures and gender sensitive representation to better provide legal service for women

In 2021, WCLAC trained 66 (10 males and 56 females (Sharia lawyers in Ramallah, Hebron and Bethlehem between the age group of 22-26 years as part of its capacity building programs for Shari'a lawyer trainees.

The training topics that were discussed throughout these sessions revolved around divorce procedures; especially in different jurisdiction systems in West Bank and Jerusalem courts, women's rights that arise from divorce (types, difference in divorce agreements between Shari'a courts in West Bank and Jerusalem), gender (concept, discrimination in roles, discriminatory laws and articles) and gender based violence (marital rape, sexual harassment, protection services provided to women, sexual assaults within the family and killing women). Further, topics focused on inheritance, banning polygamy and the impact on women, the Israeli Family Affairs Court; its specializations, procedures, practical cases, and a comparison between the cases submitted to the Family Affairs Court and the Sharia courts in Jerusalem and finally the procedure departments in Jerusalem and the National Insurance Institute for their intersection with rulings issued by Sharia courts and family affairs.

By the end of the training, the participants highlighted that the training contributed to enriching their legal information, especially in passing the legal pleading permission exam. The training was able to break the barrier between theoretical and practical part, as it created an incentive and impulse to engage them to work on issues that concern women and the family. Additionally, the discussion groups were in the meetings constituted a qualitative addition to the brainstorming in the group work.

As a result of the training, 2 female lawyers' trainees engaged in the practical training at WCLAC's office in Ramallah for a period of 2 months each. The trainee lawyers engaged in the legal consultation sessions at WCLAC office and the litigation on behalf of women at the Shari'a courts. The lawyer trainees were coached by WCLAC's lawyers both at the office and the courts. They were also provided with information on procedures to be followed while providing the legal counselling to women; especially confidentiality and using a gender sensitive and responsive approach. They

also worked on documenting legal files and preparing files and assisting in the work of the lawsuit regulations and drafting of judicial requests/pleads.

3.2.3 Develop capacities of women activist to increase their awareness of their legal and social rights and to be catalyst of change in their local communities

WCLAC trained 30 women activists on managing social and legal awareness sessions based on gender-based violence and women's rights. Participant women activists were between the age of 35-45 years old from underserved areas in southern Hebron (such as Dura, Beit Awa, Al-Fawar, Kharas, Al Thahreyah, Beit Mreisem, and Al Samou' villages).

According to the pre and post assessment of the evaluation session, 80% of participants expressed a high level of interest in the training sessions. They expressed that this is their first time to participate in such training. Moreover, they explained that these sessions helped them to gain facilitation skills such as good listening and how to differentiate between needs and goals. Also, the participants affirmed that they were introduced to new concepts related to women's rights and societal roles for women and men. Further, 80% of the participants reported that the training contributed to increasing the knowledge of facilitation skills and how to deal with the target groups when holding any community awareness sessions.

This training was followed by coaching where 4 sessions were conducted between that aimed to expose women to practical training to be able to carry out the awareness sessions. These coaching sessions mainly focused on preparing the awareness material, organizing the sessions, the themes and areas they will cover, discuss the experiences of the activists during the preparation, coordination and implementation of meetings, as well as the training experience.

Furthermore, these activists were able to conduct 37 awareness sessions targeting 610 women in different communities (such as in 7 villages in Southern (Dura, Al-Fawar, Kharas, Al-Thahriya, Beit Mreisem, Beit-Al Rush, Al-Samou' and Abu-Al Ghuzlan. The awareness sessions focused on gender-based violence, electronic blackmailing, early marriage, and rights related to inheritance. Moreover, the activists talked about the organizations that provide services to women such as WCLAC and other institutions based on the National Referral System.

As for Jerusalem, WCLAC developed the capacities of 26 women activists between the age 30-60 years old for a total of 8 days. The training sessions focused on facilitation skills, gender, women's rights within existing laws, gender-based violence, available services for women victims of violence, the National Referral System, and cyber-crimes. As a result of the training 14 women activists were selected to transfer their knowledge to other women in their communities through awareness sessions.

In Jerusalem, the selection criteria focused on their interest to promote women's rights, being influential in their local community or at the family level, have a desire to bring about positive change, ability to transfer experience and ideas, gained trust in their local community and have ease of movement, punctuality and responsibility. Accordingly, a number of official and civil institutions were contacted to nominate women activists. Thus, the Department of Gender in Jerusalem Governorate, MOWA, a group of women's organizations in villages and localities of Jerusalem Governorate were contacted. As a result, 26 women activists between the age of 30-60 years old, and 3 female lawyers were invited; to integrate social and legal awareness into the meetings that will be carried out by women activists, as well as to provide more comprehensive interventions with Shari'a lawyers.

By the end of the training, an evaluation was conducted where it was clear that the participants benefited from the information and the topics that were provided, as their knowledge increased

by 75%, 100% expressed that the topics were useful, and the information they obtained will be transferred to the surrounding environment and work, 85% reported that the training sessions helped them to better understand and accept others. It is worth noting that after attending these sessions the women activists managed to refer 5 women victims of GBV to receive social and legal services from WCLAC.

3.2.4 Carry out strategic partnership with CBOs (Tubas, Al Najda) to build the capacity of women activists and local women's protection committees and organize awareness campaign in their local communities

WCLAC continued its partnership with local community based organizations to extend services to women victims of GBV in remote and marginalized communities. During 2021, WCLAC held an operational training for Tubas and Al-Najda grassroots organizations team of social workers and lawyers, in addition to the group of volunteers. These two CBOs have extended their work to mobilize community members' especially men to promote women's rights and create agents of changes. As such the two CBOs established local protection committees composed of men who would be exposed to capacity building and awareness raising as well as coaching to transfer their knowledge to other men in their local communities. During the evaluation meeting with these two CBOs WCLAC focused on evaluating the protection committees' course of action, highlight the challenges that has faced the work and analyzing them with the aim of learning and building experiences. They were also provided with a specialized training guide related to working with different target groups that has been developed by WCLAC, which will contribute in providing feedback about the awareness sessions especially those related to working with women activists.

Provide appropriate legal advice and support to women who experienced gendered corruption including sextortion

During 2021, WCLAC conducted a specialized training course on dealing with complaints attended by 10 lawyers from WCLAC and its four partner CBOS (Tubas Charitable Society, Al-Najda, Jericho Women's Society and Nahdet Bint Al-Reef in Hebron). The training aimed to enhance the participants' skills and knowledge in receiving complaints/reports related to extortion and sexual exploitation, providing legal assistance and counselling to women victims of extortion and sexual exploitation.

It also introduced the participants to the concept of gender-based corruption, and the gendered impact of corruption, the reasons behind silence on cases of gender-based corruption practices, especially sextortion and extortion, and the mechanisms to prevent the risks of corruption on women. Additionally, the training discussed the complaint mechanisms and reporting on gender-based corruption, in terms of the procedures adopted, handling complaints, means of receiving the complaint, and following-up the complaint with the competent authorities. In addition, the session introduced practical and interactive session focused on methods of providing legal, technical and social support services on complaints, especially extortion and sexual exploitation.

Accordingly, participants will be able to provide legal advice to women who seek support on gendered impact of corruption.

Supervision and follow-up meetings for Al Najda and Tubas staff members

Partnership and support for the grassroots organizations requires vigorous follow-up with them to ensure providing quality services and support to women victims of GBV. As such four follow-up and supervision sessions were held during this period with 12 staff members from Tubas Charitable Society and Al-Najda Charitable Society. The sessions focused on reviewing plans and building a program of activities for the year, as well as reviewing cases and provision of services

and present more clarifications on forming the feminist activists' groups, the goal of the idea and mechanisms for working on it, and the upcoming interventions that will take place at the level of training and training implementation.

Both Tubas Charitable Society and Al Najda managed to provide legal and social counseling services to 80 women. Two groups of women activists were formed in Tubas and Tulkarm, with 20 feminist activists, 10 in each group. These women activists were exposed to 8 training sessions aimed to build their capacities on gender and women's rights and to transfer their knowledge to other women in their communities.

Accordingly, the women activists were able to hold awareness-raising sessions on gender and gender-based violence in their communities in Tubas and Tulkarm governorates, targeting more than 385 women in these areas. Also 4 protection committees have been formed since the beginning of the project (Jenin / Tubas / Qalqilya / Tulkarm), including 40 members from community actors, 24 of them are males. Moreover, 16 training sessions were provided to build the capacity of committee members, 4 training days for each committee, and 8 follow-up meetings were held with committee members.

These protection committees were exposed to coaching sessions to design and carry out awareness sessions in their community. As a results, the committee members were able to carry out 21 awareness-raising meetings with their local communities, targeting 315 community members, 210 of whom were male. Finally, the protection committees were able to refer more than 10 cases of women victims of GBV to different service providers in their communities.

Under a joint project with AMAN, this activity was implemented on three phases, the first phase was related to conducting a joint training for the 4 partner CBOs on developing initiatives, the second phase was related to preparing for the initiatives and then conducting awareness raising initiatives as well as developing videos.

A two-day training course was implemented on December 1st and 2nd, which aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of participants in the management and development of community initiatives on issues related to gender-based corruption. 15 female participants from partners grassroots organizations participated. The training focused on presenting a summary on corruption and gender-based corruption, planning and designing community initiatives against corruption, developing the goals and action plan of the initiatives, in addition to preparing the initiative's proposal initially. The participants were divided into 4 working groups, where each CBO worked on preparing, developing and developing an initiative proposal related to strengthening the fight against corruption risks based on gender.

Preparing for community initiatives

Two meetings were held via Zoom on December 4th and 6th for Tubas Charitable Society and the Jericho Women's Association. The second meeting was held on December 9th for Nahdat Al-Rif Bint Association and Al-Najda Association. The meetings aimed to discuss the initiatives and activities that will be implemented until the end of the year. It was agreed to implement 3 joint activities:

1. Hold a training course for the directorates of the MOSD in the four governorates (Tulkarm, Tubas, Jericho and Hebron),
2. Hold an awareness session for beneficiaries of social services in each of the four governorates,
3. Prepare videos to raise awareness about corruption and gender-based corruption.

Implementation of community initiatives:

The initiative was based on raising the awareness of the target groups on corruption and gendered based corruption. Seven training workshops were held in Jericho, Tulkarm, Tubas, and Hebron, with the active participation of 105 participants (94 F and 11 M), staff of MOSD and women beneficiaries of government services programs.

The 3 training workshops targeted 45 staff members of the directorates of the Ministry of Social Development (34 F and 11 M) specialized in providing services to women. The trainings mainly focused on concepts of corruption and its implications for providing services to target groups benefiting from the services of the Ministry of Social Development, legal responsibility and criminal adaptation of corruption crimes in accordance with the Anti-Corruption Law, and legal obligations on sector employees to report corruption related to gender extortion, as well as the legal framework for combating corruption and its link to combating discrimination against woman.

It should be mentioned that the workshops were carried out in Tubas on December 21st for 15 staff members (10 F and 5 M), Tulkarem on December 26th for 15 staff members (12 F and 3 M), and finally in Dura -Hebron on December 28th for 15 participants (12 F and 3 M).

As for the awareness sessions for beneficiaries of social services, 4 training workshops attended by 60 women beneficiaries from the social development services programs were implemented in Tubas on December 23rd (15 women), Jericho on December 27th (15 women), Tulkarem on December 30th (15 women) and Dura – southern Hebron on December 29th (15 women).

The sessions clarified the concept of sexual blackmail with relation to corruption, dealt with the mechanisms for reporting gender-based corruption and ways to protect women who report sexual blackmail, as well as the general concept of corruption according to Palestinian legislation and its relationship to gender-based corruption. The sessions also dealt with providing an awareness material for women about the mechanism of reporting on sexual blackmail on the website of AMAN. It clarified that woman can submit complaints on gendered impact of corruption while ensuring the protection and animosity as well as privacy of women who submit their complaints.

Media production accompanying the initiative:

Content and media messages were drafted and prepared to produce 3 awareness videos about the gendered-impact of corruption, services provided by government agencies, and legal mechanisms for reporting. The media production is still in the review and development stage and will be issued soon.

.2.6 Build the capacity of volunteer groups in organizing community activities3 that

contribute to the political, economic, social and legal empowerment of women, as well as opportunities for the exchange of best practices

WCLAC believes that meaningful change in favour of women's rights begins at the grassroots level. For this reason, WCLAC works with volunteer clusters to advocate for legal and policy reform and to grow an awareness of women's rights in underserved and marginalised communities throughout the West Bank. Volunteer mobilisation also empowers women (as well as men who support women's rights) with skills to develop their capacities, self-esteem, social status and voice in the public sphere. WCLAC supports teams of volunteers working in 4 locations to promote women's rights across the West Bank. Volunteers – a mix of male and female young professionals, typically fresh graduates or university students – are handed with knowledge and information

to organise and lead awareness-raising and advocacy events on women's rights in their local communities that contribute to the economic, legal, social and political empowerment of women and enable them to exchange experiences. These activities usually include information-sharing workshops on women's rights and gender issues, educational and recreational activities, and cultural events. Through this network of volunteers, WCLAC is able to extend its reach, bringing its vision to conservative isolated, hard-to-reach locations. WCLAC also believes in the importance of targeting male volunteers in its programmes, and indeed the number of male volunteers forms almost half of our total number of volunteers. WCLAC volunteers are highly committed and dedicated to furthering the vision and message of WCLAC.

During 2021, WCLAC has successfully formed 2 **youth volunteers' networks** (38 volunteer; 32 females and 6 males) between the age of 18-25 in northern West Bank (Qalqilyia) and Southern West Bank (Hebron) aiming to promote women's rights across the West Bank. The youth Volunteers networks were carefully selected among male and female young professionals, typically fresh graduates or university students who are active and youth leaders in their communities. In addition to their highly committed and dedicated to furthering the vision and message of WCLAC. Intensive Capacity building trainings, roundtables discussions and coaching sessions will be carried out by WCLAC targeting the Volunteers as to be able to organize and lead awareness-raising and advocacy events on women's rights in their local communities that contribute to the economic, legal, social and political empowerment of women and enable them to exchange experiences. Through this network of volunteers, WCLAC is able to extend its reach, bringing its vision to conservative isolated, hard-to-reach locations. WCLAC also believes in the importance of targeting male volunteers in its programs, and indeed the number of male volunteers forms almost half of our total number of volunteers.

WCLAC developed a capacity building program to equip the young male and female volunteer with skills and knowledge on women's rights. They are then provided with coaching to design and carry out local initiatives in their local communities to promote women's rights. As such, WCLAC conducted 4 training sessions were conducted focusing on gender, human rights and GBV, the Family Protection Bill and Penal Code. It is worth noting that according to the post assessment analysis 85% of the participants reported change in their knowledge, 80% of the trainees highlighted that their understanding and knowledge of the gender gaps within the personal status law and the National Referral System to support women access to protection services increased. Additionally, 75% of the trainees expressed that their understanding of the legal gaps Panel Code improved as well 85% reported change in their perspective of gender roles, violence against women and women rights. Furthermore, one of the major trainings' outcomes was the design of local initiatives that aimed and utilizing the acquired knowledge to promote women's rights in their local communities.

During this reporting period, WCLAC organized a central workshop targeting the 2 youth volunteers' groups aimed at gathering the two groups of male and female volunteers (21 from Hebron, 17 from Qalqilya) to exchange knowledge and experience where each group presented its experience and evaluation on both the training program and the implemented initiatives. During this workshop, youth discussed the challenges they have faced during the implementation of their local initiatives. They also presented their positive feedback on the training programs, in particular the legal gaps in different Palestinians' law, such as the Family Protection Bill. The majority of youth expressed their great appreciation of recognizing the main articles of Family Protection Bill and the gaps of the Penal Code that discriminate against women and prevent them access to justice.

The volunteer groups designed and launched a number of local initiatives in their communities. One of these initiatives was implemented by 8 youth volunteers (1 M, 7 F) who held a session in the Cultural Cooperation Association in the old city of Hebron aimed at raising local awareness on the Family Protection Bill and the importance of adopting this law. This session was attended by a total of 23 women from Hebron old city. One of the women who participated in the session mentioned that the adoption of the Family Protection Bill is very significant as the women suffer from gender-based discrimination and having such law will contribute to protecting women within their homes. Other women echoed that this session contributed to increasing their knowledge on the Family Protection Bill and their support to its adoption.

The volunteer group in Qalqilia have designed and launched their local initiative during the 16 Days of Combating Violence Against Women. The 15 youth (4 M and 11 F). The initiative revolved around raising the awareness on gender and women's rights through an innovative approach. The volunteers group held a competition on the general public knowledge on gender and women's rights, which was conducted during the Bazar that was organized by the Ministry of Culture in Qalqilia. The volunteer groups held the competition for 20 participants (5 M, 15 F) on general knowledge on gender, women's rights and Family Protection Bill. The volunteer group in Qalqilia continued their initiative through painting a mural on a wall on the main street, which highlighted women's rights and GBV to providing a visual message to the general public. The main slogan volunteer group selected for this mural was (female and male youth are united to stop GBV).

3.3. Mobilization of community members to initiate feminist and human rights discourse is initiated

During this reporting period, WCLAC established **thematic Hubs**, which is considered a new strategic component of social mobilization. The main aim of establishing these hubs is to mobilize community members and influence them to act as alliance and active agents of in their communities. During the first half of 2021, WCLAC has carried out several internally brainstorming meetings to further discuss the idea and concept of this new strategic component. Accordingly, an internal committee was established among WCLAC staff agree on the creation of the hubs that would mobilize and advocate alliance and agents for change on genders and women rights in the Palestinian community through; engaging active female and male lawyers, journalist, human rights defenders and political parties into four thematic hubs; to advocate for women rights and gender issues in the Palestinian community, raising awareness, enhancing the knowledge and practices of members of these four thematic hubs about human rights, gender equality, women's rights, etc. in addition to discussing Palestinian women's concerns in the local laws and legislation; such as personal status law and women's rights in Palestine and the Legal gaps in the personal transfer system. Highlighting gaps of national laws that are considered as essential obstacles and challenges for women in the public life and ensuring the importance of ratifying the Family Protection Bill and its serious implications on women, children and family in the Palestinian community. The selection of criteria of hubs' members were identified as follows; the participants/ members should be active members in the community, have previous engagement in relevant activities with WCLAC, leadership ability, good communication skills, enthusiasm, the age 22 years old and above, Gender, geographical location, believe in human rights in general and women's rights in particular, has the willingness to participate and be committed to the group throughout the meetings, activities and workshops.

The first introductory meeting of the human rights defenders' hubs was carried out in Nablus on August 23rd. A total of 18 Females, aging range between 22-35 years old, have attended the meeting. In addition to the preparatory meeting with lawyers' hub that was held on September 15th, at WCLAC office in Ramallah, were a total of 15 lawyers (12 F, 3 M), their age between 22-35, have attended this meeting.

WCLAC has introduced in both meetings this strategic component at WCLAC and presented the objectives and methodology of these hubs. Following lively discussions among the hubs' groups, members showed their willing and interest of being part of these hubs as alliance and agents for change on genders and women rights in the Palestinian community.

3.4. Effective engagement of in national, regional and international coalitions and networks is strengthened

3.4.1 Engagement in active networks and coalitions to support women's rights

WCLAC works within networks and coalitions to target national, regional and international decision-makers in order to affect essential legal and policy changes for women in Palestine. Coalitions are comprised of civil society actors, representatives from governmental bodies, members of political parties and other decision-makers. WCLAC also incorporates representatives from its volunteer clusters into the coalitions, thereby bringing the voice of the Palestinian community to the decision-making level. Participation, in turn, empowers volunteers with invaluable advocacy skills. WCLAC is a member in numerous local and international coalitions and networks including: 1) *The National Committee for Women's Labour and a commitment in a periodic meetings*, 2) *NGO Forum on Violence Against Women (Al Muntada)*, 3) *SALMA Network against violence against women in the Arab world*, 4) *AISHA Network (Arab Women's Forum)*, 5) *Arab Network for Monitoring and Changing the Image of Women and Men in Media (ANMCWM)*, 6) *Musawa Coalition (Equality without Reservations)*, 7) *Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and the Gender Working Group*, 8) *National Committee to Combat Violence Against Women*, 9) *Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship Education (ANHRE) Network*, 10) *National Committee of the Palestinian National Coalition on UN Resolution 1325*, 11) *Media and Rights Coalition to Ensure Implementation of Courts Decisions*, 12) *The Coalition on women with disability*, 13) *The Palestinian coalition on social, economic, and cultural rights (ADALA)*, 14) *Women Employment committee*, 15) *PNGO-Network*.

During this reporting period, WCLAC continued its work to advocate for better protection for women through the upcoming revision of the Family Protection Bill. WCLAC as an NGO and part of **Al-Muntada Forum to Combat Violence against Women** and the Amal Coalition have previously submitted several recommendations on how to render the new law more gender sensitive and secure better protection against gender-based violence

WCLAC participated in a Training Program on Gender Statistics which aims to increase the knowledge on how to compile, analyze, disseminate and communicate gender statistics in a user friendly way.

As an active member of the **Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network**, WCLAC participated in the periodic meeting of the Network in April where Human Rights updates were shared among the members and a special emphasis was given to the adopted criminal protection laws in each country, as well as the application of Council of Europe against Domestic Violence "Istanbul Convention", in terms of raising awareness on its importance and the adequacy of the domestic laws and legislations of each country with the Convention. Furthermore, focus was also given to evaluate the previous strategic plan of the Gender and Gender Working Group.

WCLAC has also been part of the discussion meetings on the strategic plan for the **gender group within the Euro-Med** and the future strategic plan for the Euro-Med Network.

WCLAC continued to be an effective member of the **Higher Committee on UNSCR1325**, which was formulated based on a Cabinet decision and responsible for following up the National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR1325. It is also an effective member of the **National Coalition on UNSCR1325**, which consists of representatives of CSOs and aims to engage civil society organizations in implementation of the NAP. In January, WCLAC participated in reviewing and developing a specialized strategic plan of the **National Women's Coalition on UNSCR1325** to align it with the current political challenges.

WCLAC participated in the meeting of the **Non-Governmental Women Coalition for the Implementation of CEDAW** in occupied State of Palestine. The meeting aimed at discussing the action plan of the coalition regarding CEDAW, the implementation of the convention especially after considering shadow report submitted by GUPW and next steps regarding developing the upcoming shadow report especially that the PA will present its report in July 10th.

WCLAC also plays an active role in the **Committee on Minimum Wage** to ensure having fair and equal wages for women. This Committee plays a significant role to affect labour policies and influence Ministry of Labour to modify employment policies in accordance with international conventions Palestine acceded.

During this year, and within the framework of WCLAC's action plan, on the project of the **Personal Status Coalition** supervised by the Women's Center for Legal and Social Counseling, a reference paper was prepared on the identity and form of the coalition and the general objectives of the coalition in addition to drafting the vision and mission for this coalition as well as the committees that will emerge from this coalition, such as the Media Committee, the Advocacy Committee, and the Legal Committee. It was agreed that a general conference would be held to address these issues.

The Arab States CSOs and Feminist Network, In March 2020, the Arab States CSOs and feminist Network was established with the purpose of ensuring a gendered COVID-19 Response and Recovery as well as facilitate the participation of women in the region in the global feminist movement, regional and global meetings and convening. The Network since its first meeting decided to address all gender equalities that women face in the Arab region and which have exacerbated because of COVID-19, aiming at sustainability beyond the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, as the network has now a membership of around 45 CSOs from 13 Arab countries. It also has a Steering Group which takes daily decisions and regularly consults and reports to the Network.

Strategic goal 4: Develop institutional and human capacity in order to ensure the sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of WCLAC

4.1. Develop WCLAC policies and procedures

4.1.1 Improve WCLAC policies, procedures and practices.

Draft new policies and procedures

During the reporting period, the three new policies that were drafted last year related to Child Safeguarding Policy, Anti-Corruption Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy were finalized and approved by WCLAC Board of Directors in Sept. 2021. The Child Safeguarding Policy aims to provide guidelines to WCLAC and its employees with the aim to sustain a safe environment for the children they encounter during the activities and protect them from any harm. The Anti-Corruption policy aims to promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively. Moreover, the policy provides guidelines to all of WCLAC's employees during their daily operations through providing the required practical knowledge to detect and prevent any corrupt actions or practices. And finally, the Sexual Harassment policy aims to provide guidelines to all of WCLAC's employees with the required practical knowledge to detect and prevent any harassment actions, discrimination as well as sexual exploitation and abuse of authority. WCLAC is committed to provide a safe environment for all employees free from discrimination on any ground and from harassment at work including sexual harassment. It should be noted that these three policies will be activated in the beginning of 2022.

During 2021 WCLAC also finalized the workload review of all its staff to ensure that their time and allocation on project are done in a comprehensive manner. This was followed by a salary scale review, which was done after conducting a market survey with similar organizations to define whether WCLAC's salaries are in line with the market. Accordingly, the salary scale was developed and approved by the Board of Directors. Currently, as staff members are placed on the new salary scale.

As for the complaint mechanism with external complaints it was finalized and presented to the Board of Directors. There were some comments from the Board of Directors (BOD), which will be reviewed and shared with the BOD for final review and approval. Regarding the Human Resources Manual, the BOD suggested to postpone it till WCLAC finalizes the job descriptions and staff evaluation forms. WCLAC is also in the process of developing the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which will be based on the job description of the employees and related tasks. It is planned to utilize these KPIs for staff annual evaluations; end of 2022.

4.1.2 Enhance WCLAC's programme and information management system

Undertake evaluations of WCLAC's programmes

During the reporting period, WCLAC immediately responded to the first comment made by the external midterm evaluator for its 5 years strategic plan (which was conducted in June 2018) on reviewing the Logical Framework. An internal planning workshop took place with WCLAC staff to define interventions and better develop indicators. WCLAC will design an action plan to respond to these recommendations with timeframe and tasks and responsibilities. This plan will be designed through a participatory approach that involves all staff members and WCLAC management team.

Develop WCLAC's library

During this reporting period, WCLAC has inserted 51 books on WCLAC's electronic library catalogue. Due to WCLAC's rich library many visitors come to read and photocopy books on women's issues. From January 1st – December 30th, 163 visitors (128 females and 35 males) have accessed WCLAC's library.

4.2. Develop professional skills of WCLAC staff

WCLAC has ongoing capacity building for its staff through an annual capacity building plan, which includes capacity building of staff, appraisal system and incentives policy based on staff evaluation, participation in local, regional and international learning opportunities, including conferences, workshops and trainings. In 2019, WCLAC allocated budget to ensure that the administrative staff gets equal opportunities for capacity building since most of the opportunities are programmatic. During these six months, 16 staff members benefitted from the capacity building trainings.

Meanwhile, the units' managers were contacted in order to provide human resources with the training needs of their employees. Accordingly, a comprehensive training plan was built, which will be implemented over the course of 2021-2023, with the possibility of making adjustments based on specialization and functional differences.

Part III. Annex

Tables for WCLAC's provided services



Part III. Annex

Tables for WCLAC's provided services

The following tables indicate the numbers of women that WCLAC has provided services to, in different categories

Table 1. Type of Service Provided

		<i>Ramallah</i>	<i>South of the Pal. Territories</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	<i>Total</i>
Type of service	Legal and social	120	198	70	388
	Legal	26	24	3	53
	Social	27	•	1	28
	Total	173	222	74	469

Table 2. Type of Case

		<i>Number of cases</i>
Legal/social case	Marital obedience incl. housing	37
	Custody and visits	91
	<i>Nafaka</i> (alimony)	325
	<i>Mahr</i> (dowry)	28
	Divorce	130
	Rights issues	2
	Total	613

Table 3. Social Indicators of Women Clients

		<i>Ramallah</i>	<i>Bethlehem</i>	<i>Hebron</i>	<i>Jericho</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>
Average family monthly income (NIS)	Less than 500	39%	0	62%	49%	49%
	501 - 1000	0.5%	0	0	3%	1%
	1001- 1500	2%	0	3%	11%	4%
	1501 - 2000	0	0	0	3%	21%
	2001- 2500	3%	0	3%	14%	3%
	2501- 3000	55%	100%	32%	9%	21%
	No income	0.5%	0	0%	11%	1%

		<i>Ramallah</i>	<i>Bethlehem</i>	<i>Hebron</i>	<i>Jericho</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>
Age	Under 15	0.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	16-20	3%	9%	10%	34%	1%
	21-25	19%	9%	19%	26%	27%
	26-35	37.5%	54%	41%	26%	39%
	36-40	20%	11%	12%	0%	8%
	40 and above	20%	17%	18%	14%	25%
	Unknown	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

		Total from all WCLAC's offices
Level of education	Unknown / No answer	3.2%
	No formal education	0.2%
	Elementary school	5.6%
	Secondary school	14%
	High school	40%
	Diploma	16%
	Higher education	21%

Table 4. Source of Referral

		Total percentage from all WCLAC's offices
Source of referral	Courts	27%
	People	8%
	MoSA	8%
	Other institutions	7%
	Lawyers	3%
	Police	0.5%
	Governorates	0.5%
	Women by themselves	46%
	Prisons	0

Table 5. Type of perpetrator

		Total percentage from all WCLAC's offices
Perpetrator	Father	0.0%
	Ex-husband	17%
	Husband's family/ relatives	0.5%
	Husband	77%
	Outside the family	1%
	Neighbours/ Friends	1%
	Siblings	1%
	Fiancé	2%

Table 6. Social Status

		Total percentage from all WCLAC's offices
Social Status	Single	3%
	Married	10%
	Divorced	26%
	Left the Marital House	52%
	Abandoned	5%
	Widowed	1%
	Engaged	3%

Table 7. Geographical Distribution of Women Beneficiaries

		<i>Total percentage from all WCLAC's offices</i>
Geographical Distribution	City	41.6%
	Town	22%
	Village	26%
	Refugee Camp	10%
	Community (Khirbeh)	0.4%

Table 8. How Did the Beneficiaries Know about WCLAC

		<i>Total percentage from all WCLAC's offices</i>
Knowledge	Official and non-official Institutions	21%
	Awareness sessions	2%
	Referred from a previous beneficiary	11%
	She was a previous beneficiary	15%
	People	26%
	Media	1%
	Courts	24%

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