

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of **Global Dialogue and Democracy** MIFTAH

المبادرة الفلسطينية لتعميق الحوار العالمي والديمقراطية



Analytical Study:

**The Political and Economic Reality of
Palestinian Women after the Declaration
of the State of Emergency**

2020

[1]

The reality of political participation and economic implications for Palestinian women under the state of emergency

First Edition 2020

Copyright



Funded by:



Representative Office of Norway
to the Palestinian Authority

Prepared by: Lubna Al-Ashqar

Mohamad Shua'ibi

MIFTAH's staff

Lamis Hantouli

Director of the Policy Dialogue and Good Governance Program

Hanan Said

Project coordinator

Translated by: Abdulrahim Abdulrazeq

The content of this document does not reflect the official opinion of the funder

MIFTAH FOREWORD

March 5, 2020 marked the beginning of a critical stage in Palestinian society. President Mahmoud Abbas' declaration of a state of emergency due to the spread of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) created a general sense of mayhem, while the repercussions of the ensuing lockdown resulted in the disruption of most service and public sectors even as these precautionary measures were necessary to avoid an epidemic. One issue closely monitored by parties and institutions concerned with quarantine conditions and measures and their repercussions on families, marginalized sectors in particular, was the spike in domestic violence.

From the start, MIFTAH took the initiative, in line with its role in influencing public policies, to monitor the official discourse and government policies during the state of emergency. It also began gathering field data on the status of women in terms of political participation within the new socio-economic context created by the state of emergency, which increased the exclusion of Palestinian women. Perhaps because women are categorized as a marginalized sector, this made it imperative to follow up on the economic ramifications of the state of emergency on them in terms of poverty rates, lack of job opportunities and low wages.

MIFTAH prepared an analytical focus study entitled "Political participation and economic repercussion on Palestinian women during the state of emergency". The study analyses and diagnoses the condition of women during this period at the level of political participation and economic repercussions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. MIFTAH's objective from this study was to highlight the gaps in the current discourse and procedures and showcase the challenges and policies of exclusion on women's participation during this period. It also identified the programs catered to supporting women during the state of emergency and home quarantine and pinpointed the areas where intervention is necessary from official, civil society and international parties.

The study results can be considered indicators, which decision-makers can utilize to develop policies and government measures to support the involvement of women and integration of youth in public affairs and in the various sectors, particularly the political.

Dr. Tahreer Araj

Executive Director

Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy – MIFTAH

➤ **Table of Contents**

Item	Page No
Introduction	5
Importance of the study	7
Purpose of the study	7
The methodology of the study	8
First - Women political participation during the emergency period	8
Second - The economic consequences of the Corona pandemic on women	13
Third - The impact of the economic conditions on the social status of women	17
Fourth - Women's Initiatives during the emergency period	19
Conclusions	24
Recommendations	25
Bibliography	28

Introduction

The Palestinian government has taken preventive measures and procedures to contain the outbreak of the new Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), just after the declaration of a state of emergency on March 5, 2020 by President Mahmoud Abbas in accordance with a presidential decree. In order to cope with the pandemic, the government closed the crossing passages; imposed mandatory quarantine; closed governmental, nongovernmental and private institutions, including kindergartens, schools and universities; and restricted movement among governorates and their cities, villages and camps, which brought about a disruption in daily life.

The closure measures have led to a deterioration in the economic conditions, as a result of the up to two weeks long incubation period of the virus, which caused the speed of its outbreak to be an uncontrollable challenge without enforcing strict collective quarantine measures, which made the government's task to curb the risk of its outbreak impossible. The same applies to the Gaza Strip; Hamas imposed measures similar to those taken by its counterparts in the West Bank in order to cope with the pandemic, even though it didn't intend to abide by the decisions of the President and the Government of the West Bank.

Overall, the economic damage has affected all aspects of Palestinian life, with vital sectors shut down, such as building, construction, factories and workshops. Transportation has also been stopped, which led to a state of paralysis in these sectors. Albeit the enormous damage done to poor families, the Palestinian economy has generally survived given it is a simple economy with pillars founded on shops, agriculture, simple production and small individual and family-operated workshops. As the tourism sector stopped completely, all tourists' hotel reservations were canceled and religious sites were closed to visitors. Restaurants and wedding halls were closed as well. These sub-sectors account for a large proportion of the national economy.

In addition, the majority of Palestinian workers employed inside the occupied territory adhered to government measures that called upon them not to go to work in Israel so that the virus infection would not be transmitted to their families and regions. They were also subject to deterioration in their economic conditions. We cannot ignore the economic damages to women who work under economically insecure conditions, especially those working in services, trade, restaurants, nurseries and kindergartens sectors. Those women, along with the families who lost their source of livelihood due to the pandemic which is estimated to around 53 thousand families, have been included in

the list of "new poor". According to the Ministry of Social Development, their number is increasing.¹

In a report issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics on April 23rd 2020, it was projected that the Palestinian economy would incur an estimated loss of USD 2.5 billion if the corona pandemic lasts for three months pending a gradual return scenario to the pre-crisis situation. Thus, it is predicted that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will decline by 14% in the year 2020 compared to the year 2019. At the level of economic activities, it is expected that the size of losses in agriculture, forestry and fishing activity will amount to around USD 200 million. Losses in other economic activities are estimated to reach USD 362 million in the industrial activity, USD 220 million in the constructions activity and USD 1,175 billion in the services activities. Based on the components of the service activities compiled in the economic surveys database, and taking into account activities that have completely stopped such as restaurants and hotels, passengers transport activities, and activities that have been partially stopped, such as retail activity for some commodities and for some stores, the estimates indicated that the losses in the wholesale and retail trade activity accounted for 59% of the total losses of the service activities, which translates into USD 689 of the aforesaid USD 1,175 million. The losses of the other different components of the services activity amounted to 31% of the total losses of the services activity (i.e. USD 374 million). As for losses in the restaurants and hotels activity that were subject to a complete closure, it was estimated to be approximately 10% of the total service activity losses, i.e. almost USD 112 million.

In light of the new situation, the social conditions have worsened, especially among women, with the deterioration of economic situation. Since the beginning of the pandemic, two women died as a result of psychological and physical violence; 21% of women have attempted suicide and dozens of women were subjected to psychological and physical violence.confirmed ,The Minister of Social Development, Ahmed Majdalani ² in relation to violence against women that the majority of women experienced multiple forms of violence at the same time, and that their issues were dealt with. 40% of them were subjected to psychological violence and 31% of them experienced physical violence, whereas other women suffered from other forms of violence (such as freedom of movement restrictions, sexual harassment, economic violence, rape, high risk to life, electronic violence, and forced marriage). According to the Minister, this forced women, almost 60% of them, to run away from their homes and caused 21% of them to attempt

¹ Al Deek: Social development starts the listing of the new poor in Palestine, See: <https://bit.ly/3jeezZ>

² Report: Corona increases the frequency of household violence...two death cases for two women, **Alhayat Aljadida** Newspaper, see: <https://bit.ly/2VZzTNr>

suicide. In addition, other women were exposed to other negative effects such as physical or psychological disorders, fractures and bruises, and extramarital pregnancy.³

Likewise, an increase was witnessed in the discrimination, exclusion and marginalization rates against women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, coupled with increases in poverty and unemployment rates, which was to be expected. Such increases expose women to social and economic challenges and highlight the increasing fragility of women status as well as the aggravation of discrimination between women and men, which weakened women more and more.⁴

It is noteworthy that the marginalization and exclusion of women were strikingly visible, along with curbing of their participation in the work of the emergency committees, which revealed a deteriorating reality of women political participation at several levels, including: Their limited participation in emergency, support and guidance committees; curbing of female local councils members' response to the pandemic hand in hand with their male counterparts; suspension or postponement of local women initiatives due to quarantine regulations; and lastly the lack of support provided to women in cash or in kind during the state of emergency.

This situation and the ensuing procedures have sparked widespread debate among women experts, gender experts, and civil society activists on the status of women in the light of international reports that discuss the extent of vulnerability and deterioration of Palestinian women conditions following the spread of the Corona virus. This demonstrates the depth of the gap in the official political, social, and economic discourse advocating women equality and societal, political, and economic justice for women (including the signing of international conventions by the State of Palestine to condemn gender-based discrimination and to commit to equality and social justice standards), which reveals the extent of discrepancy between that discourse and the actual implementation on the ground. The way the state of emergency in Palestine was managed has reinstated patriarchal norms and traditional perceptions on the stereotypical functional roles of women within the family. Observers of the entire governmental press conferences can clearly notice the marginalization and exclusion for the role and status of women from the pandemic, as if all efforts made over the past

³ The Ministry of Social Development issues a statistical bulletin of violence victims women whose cases were addressed during the first quarter of the year 2020, see: <https://bit.ly/2OtGVWB>

⁴ UN Women warns of Corona pandemic' risks in terms of aggravating women vulnerabilities in Palestine, **Al-Ayyam Newspaper**: See: <https://bit.ly/3gAqaol>

quarter century, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in the Palestinian society, were in vain.

The importance of the study

The importance of this analytical study stems from its analysis of the political, economic, and social status of women and the impacts inflicted upon women after the Corona pandemic, in light of the failure of governmental, nongovernmental and private institutions to provide an analytical reading of the new reality that the Corona pandemic has imposed on women politically and economically. The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy “MIFTAH” has assumed a leading role, along with other institutions in the society, and focused to a great extent on probing the status of women during the ongoing pandemic.

Purpose of the study

This study aims to provide an informative document supplemented with figures and graphs that shed light on the status of Palestinian women during the emergency period, with focus on the reality of their political participation in terms of existing discrepancies between the relevant discourse and procedures in place during the emergency period. Likewise, it focuses on the types of economic ramifications upon women during the same period and the kinds of programs that targeted women during the emergency period, whether from official or unofficial parties.

The methodology of the study

The compilation of data and information for the study was based on official local and international documents, resolutions and statements issued during the emergency period along with field reports prepared by Miftah coordinators in this sphere. It detected the gaps exposed by the Corona pandemic in the official discourse versus the procedures adopted by the government vis-à-vis women participation in the emergency committees as well as in the advisory committees for female local councils’ members. It examined local women's initiatives and the support provided to women during the state of emergency, including food packages, cash or service - related assistance, through:

- 1) Literature review of all data and reports on the state of emergency and its implications for the reality of women in Palestine.
- 2) Analysis of relevant data and information at two levels, namely women political participation and economic support for women.

3) Conduct data and information analyses at the aforementioned levels; identify gaps in the discourse versus procedures in place during the state of emergency and their impact on Palestinian women; identify the nature of the programs that were directed towards women during the state of emergency by local and international institutions; and finally highlight the levels of intervention required from the concerned authorities.

First - Women political participation during the emergency period

In light of the measures taken by the government to cope up with the Corona pandemic, and pursuant to its directives, the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) issued on the twelfth of March 2020 a directive to the local councils to form voluntary committees of individuals, institutions, and community and national forces to provide community support in accordance with the instructions and directives of the Ministry of Health and the Emergency Committee operating in each governorate.⁵ The statement of MoLG does not include any reference to women representation in these committees, whether female members of local councils or from the national and societal forces in these areas. Local emergency committees were rather formed from a variable number of members of the security forces, local councils, and Fatah movement affiliates in the cities, villages and camps of the West Bank. The situation in the Gaza Strip was not very different (from the West Bank). Reports of “Miftah” coordinators there indicate that the Gaza government formed a crisis cell to follow up returnees from abroad in terms of their health status in coordination with the Ministry of Health, but no woman joined this cell. As for the emergency committees, the factions of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) contributed to enhancing the role of women there both morally and economically. At least one woman joined the committee in each governorate representing one of the PLO factions, with the exception of the Palestinian National Initiative. It was exceptional that the Democratic Front had five to seven women members in every governorate in Gaza Strip. These committees are still active and are planned to last with funding from these factions until the end of the Corona crisis.

In the West Bank, the number of emergency committees reached 400 and their role was primarily focused on: controlling traffic and monitoring of citizens and merchants movement; restricting traffic hours and working hours for shops and grocery stores; following up and monitoring compliance with quarantine regulations; and raising cash and in-kind donations and distributing them to the needy. Such a mandate aimed to assure social distancing and to prevent the spread of the pandemic. It can be said that these measures have prevented the spread of the disease to a large extent. Nevertheless,

⁵ The Ministry of Local Government: Launching a voluntary campaign to cope up with the state of emergency in the local councils, (In Arabic), See: <https://bit.ly/2ZzekFT>

the emergency committees faced many challenges, the most significant of which are: the continuation of Palestinian labor in the occupied territories; the continued traffic between the West Bank and the 1948 territories; and the inability of the security forces to control the entire Palestinian territories. According to the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), the emergency committees exercised powers in many regions that are normally assumed by the official (security) forces, which constitutes a violation of the law. A statement issued by Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh on 3/4/2020 indicated that the enforcement of the compulsory domestic quarantine has been assigned to security forces and volunteers, especially in light of the lack of security personnel and the inability of the official security forces to cover all governorates. According to the ICHR, many security subcommittees of the local emergency committee in some regions carry out measures that restrict rights and freedom without legal justifications. Some emergency committees also do not deal with all the residents of the area pursuant to unified criteria relative to movement through the checkpoints, the absence of justice in the distribution of social assistance,..,etc. It was reported that some members of the emergency committees committed legal violations, such as: beatings, ill-treatment of citizens, and vandalism of property, particularly vehicles along with numerous scuffles between citizens and committees. Legally speaking, the formation of the emergency committees was neither based on any general legal mandate that is announced to all by the competent authorities on the establishment of emergency committees, nor based on any of the public authorities and powers as per (the prerequisites of) the principle of the rule of law in this field. This means that the local emergency committees established in the context of coping up with pandemic do exercise public powers and authorities, which stressed the need to rectify their legal status, especially those exercising some of the authorities and functions of the security services. ⁶ As for the Gaza Strip, the security forces of the Hamas movement deployed widely in the Gaza Strip and restricted the freedom of movement without any specific legal basis. Due to the limited outbreak of the virus there, the emergency procedures were less strict while Hamas, at the same time, rejected the enforcement of the state of emergency declared to confront the pandemic as in the West Bank. It was hesitant and then announced its own procedures that do not differ from those applied in the West Bank as it realized It needs a significant health aid from the government in the West Bank in order to be able to encounter the health repercussions of the Corona virus, in addition to the economic and social repercussions on citizens in Gaza Strip. No reports or statistics were prepared on the role or participation of women.

⁶ A position paper on the emergency committees' formation in the context of curbing the corona virus, ICHR, see: <https://bit.ly/3iE68eS>

The decision to form emergency committees in the West Bank sparked widespread criticism among legal professionals and experts through the media in terms of its lawfulness. Some committees exercised some of the tasks assigned to the security services; they set up checkpoints or participate in military checkpoints, search vehicles and prevent citizens from moving, which should be among the tasks of law enforcement forces, not volunteer committees.⁷ Also, these committees were subjected to criticism for their varying terms of reference and different chains of command from one governorate to another; some of these committees are affiliated with local councils, some belong to the governorates, and others are affiliated with Fatah movement.

On the other hand, the composition of these committees was questioned. Although it is assumed to be voluntary and open to individual and institutional memberships, many of those who went to participate were not accepted without getting any clarification on the criteria followed in volunteers' approval or exclusion. Likewise, no gender dimensions were taken into account in the formation of these committees.⁸

What we referred to above confirms that the participation of women in the work of the emergency committees was almost absent, just like the participation of many national forces, institutions, unions, trade unions and local committees was also absent from representation of these committees. On the one hand, we find a legal problem and we see lack of organization and follow-up of work mechanisms of these committees, on other hand. Likewise, we cannot ignore the fact that the government did not follow or assure the diversity of all societal groups, including women from quantitative and qualitative perspectives. One of Miftah coordinators in Tulkarem says, "Emergency committees were formed in Tulkarem city and its villages and camps, but the number of women did not exceed 10 at the whole governorate level; their work is concentrated on relief, services and provision of psychological and social support". As for the Governorates of the Gaza Strip, the coordinator of Miftah there said that the most significant role for women in the emergency committees was to participate in enhancing awareness, implementing workshops, distributing awareness related brochures, and providing and distributing in-kind assistance that varied from food packages to hygiene materials. An awareness

⁷ The emergency committees needs rectification; it should not substitute the bodies of the state; and the extension of the state of emergency violates the law, Wattan News Agency, see <https://bit.ly/38ByBNT>

⁸ A position paper on the emergency committees' formation in the context of curbing the corona virus, ICHR, see: <https://bit.ly/3iE68eS>

campaign was carried out from house to house, which involved visits to families houses in each area to raise awareness on how to evade infection; another campaign aimed to enhance the awareness of public vehicles drivers on prevention of infection, and another campaign was launched to sanitize the streets and markets in several areas of the Strip. In Jericho governorate, "Miftah" coordinator said, "women participation in the emergency committees is minimal and weak, as 11 women participated in the emergency committees in the city only; no women were part of the emergency committees of other villages; participation was limited to males only." Likewise, the official discourse of the government did not value the efforts that women or women institutions could exert as part of their personal or institutional capacities at the political, community and humanitarian levels in coping up with the pandemic. The same applies at the governorates and local councils levels, which indicates that the pandemic coping up period involved a clear contradictory breach of all government slogans and discourse advocating gender – based equality and justice, which subsequently reflects the severity of discrimination against women in terms of confining them to their stereotypical roles without any change.

The same applies to the structure and composition of Wakfet IZZ Fund, which was launched to support needy poor families during the pandemic. In addition to that it was not formed based on any legal reference, its executive and management structures included only one woman out of 30 members in its board of directors and executive team.

⁹

Lack of attention to women representation in the emergency committees and Wakfet Izz Fund limited women activities and confined their work to certain areas. For example, women participation in the emergency committees was limited to 120 female members in seven cities only, namely: Jenin, Tulkarem, Nablus, Ramallah and Al-Bireh, Bethlehem, Hebron, Yatta, and Gaza, during the outbreak of the pandemic.

⁹ Wakfet Izz Fund's Management Team, see: <https://bit.ly/38Hc02j>

Governorate	Distribution of women in the committees work areas	Number of female committee members
Jenin	Arabeh, Jalameh, Jalboun, and Ya'bad	11
Tulkarem	Illar and Qiffin	12
Nablus	Beta, Beit Furik, Jammin, Hiwara, Deir Sharaf, Asira Al Shamalia, Qusin, Kofr Qalil, Zeita	26
Ramallah and Al-Bireh	Ramon, Beitelo, Deir Ammar, Qarawa Bani Zaid, Nabi Saleh, Beitunia, Bil'in, Al-Auja, Al-Bireh, Deir Ibzei', Beit Sira, Ras Karkar, Deir Sudan	28
Ramallah and Al-Bireh	Ramon, Beitelo, Deir Ammar, Qarawa Bani Zaid, Nabi Saleh, Beitunia, Bil'in, Al-Auja, Al-Bireh, Deir Ibzei', Beit Sira, Ras Karkar, Deir Sudan	28
Bethlehem	Handaza, Tekoa', Al Ma'sara, Aldoha, Battir, Nahalin, Husan	14
Yatta	Um Lasfa, Towana, Haret Jaber	13
Gaza	Beit Hanoun, Khan Yunis	16

Their work focused on issues of social accountability and cooperation with female support members in implementing activities that support the community. They also provided families with hygiene packages and carried out awareness visits to curb the spread of the virus in Gaza Governorate. In addition, they continued their awareness campaigns on social media pages and listed the names of needy and poor families in order to raise financial and in-kind donations for them.¹⁰

Albeit their importance, these roles were not at the heart of the work of the above-mentioned emergency committees. The society's view of women role in curbing this pandemic is more in favor of their presence at the home to better implement pandemic – prevention safety measures rather than their being outside the home. Some women organizations argued that these roles are as such due to the overall economic fragility

¹⁰ The Periodical Report of Shadow Councils, Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, See: <https://bit.ly/31U0SOK>

that is reflected on women interaction and presence in the field as well as the difficulties they face in accessing some marginalized areas or due to lack of reliable information that enables women to reach marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as refugees, the elderly, and pregnant and lactating women, ... and others for in order for them to take part in implementing preventive measures to curb the epidemic. ¹¹

It is clear that the roles of women during this pandemic reinstate the stereotypical inferior view of women status by limiting the scope of their functional roles in a manner that limits women's political, economic and social participation. In this regard, UN Women warned of the dangers of the "Corona" pandemic in terms of increasing women vulnerability and aggravating gender inequality in Palestine. According to the commission, gender has not been incorporated into national and institutional efforts to combat the pandemic, and thus the socio-economic impact of the epidemic will exacerbate gender inequality and the vulnerability and fragility of women, as the UN Women expects the epidemic to disproportionately affect women, create or even aggravate pre-existing gender risks, increase vulnerabilities, and widen inequalities at all levels. ¹²

Second - The economic consequences of the Corona pandemic on women

The economic conditions of women have worsened during the Coronavirus outbreak period in the Arab world. Stereotypically, gender gaps exist, but inequality surged up following the outbreak of the virus. A study conducted by several UN committees, including the United Nations Social and Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and UN Women, confirms that the social and economic challenges that women and girls face in the Arab region have deteriorated due to Corona. ESCWA expects that the Arab region will lose at least 1.7 million jobs in the year 2020 as a result of the Corona pandemic, including approx. 700,000 jobs held by women. Albeit the rate of women participation in the labor force amounts to approximately 20% in the Arab region, their job losses will more than double the rate of men's losses. The income of women is ¹³ generally less than men and their savings are less as well. Given they have insecure jobs or living standards close to poverty level, women have been negatively affected by emergency measures. ¹⁴

¹¹ Report: How COVID-19 measures affect women, girls, men and boys differently, Ocha, See: <https://bit.ly/2AFojj>

¹² UN Women warns of Corona pandemic' risks in terms of aggravating women vulnerabilities in Palestine, **Al-Ayyam Newspaper**: See: <https://bit.ly/3gAqaol>

¹³ The Economic Impact of Corona... Women are the first to pay the price, **Aljazeera**, See: <https://bit.ly/3e7REk4>

¹⁴ The Impact of Coronavirus (Covid -19) on Women. United Nations, See: <https://bit.ly/2ZT6mGi>

These criteria apply to Palestinian women as the majority of them work on a day-to-day or a temporary contract basis, which makes them the biggest losers due to closure and work shutdown policies. A flash survey conducted by UN Women, it was found As per ¹⁵ that 95% of Palestinian women owners of micro, small and medium enterprises reported negative impacts due to the Corona pandemic. The conducted by According to a study ¹⁶ Businesswomen Forum that surveyed 280 women entrepreneurs, women lost the season of selling handicrafts and household products, and some of them were forced to close their projects. Entrepreneurial women were also affected by the closure of annual exhibitions. ¹⁷ As for women indebted (to bank) or who deal with checks, the enforcement of the comprehensive closure in the wake of pandemic caused them to be unemployed. Consequently, they were unable to fulfill their obligations towards the banks that imposed commissions on bounced checks and high interest on delayed loans installments, especially for those with small enterprises loans. It is worth noting that the Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA) issued a circular exempting Bethlehem area from interests on loans or bounced checks in March when the epidemic occurred in Bethlehem, but no such circular was issued for the rest of the Palestinian governorates. ¹⁸ This causes women to incur additional losses and constitutes a threat to their ability to sustain their own projects. The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) provided financial aid to both women and men. The MoSD sources confirmed that 50% of women who head households benefited from the financial assistance the MoSD provided during the Corona pandemic.

The sources clarified that assistance covered 30,000 families including nursery and kindergarten female workers who lost their jobs due to the pandemic as well as divorced and abandoned women benefiting from the Palestinian Maintenance Fund (PMF), whose alimony dues were delayed due to the closure of the courts. The assistance, likewise, covered women who were subject to violence during the pandemic, disabled persons and the elderly. ²⁰

¹⁵ Was Corona a gateway to uncover discrimination between women and men, a report by Maan News Network, see: <https://bit.ly/2DmO60A>

¹⁶ Report: How COVID-19 measures affect women, girls, men and boys differently, Ocha, See: <https://bit.ly/2AFojjf>

¹⁷ Sawt (Voice): Barnamej Qareeb (Nearby Program) discusses the economic impact of the corona virus. Nisaa FM Radio station, see: <https://bit.ly/2CeugKH>

¹⁸ Coping up with the Corona crisis. Palestine Monetary Authority, see: <https://bit.ly/32xfW4L>

¹⁹ Palestine. The outbreak of the Corona Pandemic undermines individual women entrepreneurship, see: <https://bit.ly/3jsyQjo>

²⁰ 50% of women heading households benefited from the financial aid provided during the corona pandemic, **Palestine News & Info Agency (Wafa)**, See: <https://bit.ly/2WeMwVh>

Wakfet Izz Fund provided an amount of NIS 700 (approx.. USD 200 each) to 2,000 workers and it is going to support 30,000 families in a later stage by disbursing NIS 500 to each family. The points to many criticisms, most significantly a target²¹ The Fund has been indicated in reports submitted by Miftah coordinators in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on the performance of the Fund and its role. Reports indicate that the fund was seen as a savior and potential aid provider to poor families as per media reporting, but the reality is that financial aid was not distributed in a way that takes into account the representation of women and that much of the aid was provided to men who were employed along with other heads of households who lost their jobs. Nevertheless, such a financial aid did not reach women

In relation to supporting the economy and developing economic policies capable of coping up with the pandemic, the government did not adopt supportive economic policies that take into account vulnerable groups in the society, such as the elderly, women and people with disabilities, or even policies that would compensate men and women affected by the pandemic. For example, the government did not provide compensation to women affected by the closure, whether working in small entrepreneurial projects, freelancing, or women who earn monthly salaries from private sector institutions. Employees were treated inconsistently; some institutions committed themselves to paying their employ a salary whereas others stopped paying any whatsoever salaries. The remaining institutions had their employees have open leaves without pay.

²¹ Wakfet Izz Fund provided an amount of NIS 500 for 30,000 families, Aliqtisadi, See: <https://bit.ly/3eclyU0>

An opinion poll conducted by the Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) on May 18th 2020 surveyed more women (52%) than men (48%), and revealed that more than a quarter (26.9%) of the respondents indicated that they had completely lost their jobs (15.7%) or had lost their jobs to some extent (11.2%) due to the pandemic and more than a third (35.8%) feared they may lose their jobs in the coming period due to COVID-19 (20.3% completely and 15.5% to some extent). To add to the foreboding economic figures, about half (49.6%) of respondents reported losing family income due to the crisis, and another 21.4% said they had lost family income to some extent; only 26.7% reported they didn't suffer any drop in their income.²²

Spotlight: A report issued by the United Nations on West Bank and Gaza's conditions in view of the pandemic indicates that telephone helplines affirm an increase in ill-treatment and violence cases, especially domestic violence against women, and parents' physical abuse of their teenage and youth sons and daughters. An increase was spotted in the number of cases of women whose lives came under threat in view of loss of work opportunities at a large scale. This leaves an impact on income and means of living, which puts tremendous pressures on families in terms of driving already vulnerable families down into poverty abyss. It, likewise, contributes to the increase in cases of abuse and violence. Several organizations working in the field of protection in Palestine pointed to an increase in tension levels among vulnerable families due to their inability to work in Israeli settlements, coupled with an increase in negative coping strategies, including child labor and early marriage. (United Nations Report on the Corona Pandemic in Palestine)

The majority of Palestinian female workers are concentrated in the private sector, which warns of an increase in potential risks in their economic conditions if the pandemic continues. Women working in the private sector constitute 68% (108,900 working women) as compared to 31% (50,400 women) working in the public sector and approx. 1,000 working women in Israel and the settlements, i.e. 0.6%. Furthermore, the percentage of workers in this informal sector is about 31.7% of the total number of workers in Palestine, including 32,200 females and 288,400 males. (The informal sector includes waged workers who do not get any of the rights applicable in the labor market,

²² COVID-19 Pandemic: Impacts and Coping Strategies among Palestinians, Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD), See: <https://bit.ly/31T4JLz>

e.g. end-of-service indemnity / retirement, paid annual leaves, or paid sick leaves)²³ It is noteworthy that these women are prone to poverty and extreme poverty; the Ministry of Social Development estimates that at least 53,000 families across the occupied Palestinian territory have fallen into the dungeons of poverty within few weeks of the outbreak of Corona pandemic, due to loss of their sources of income as a result of the comprehensive closure,²⁴ taking into account that more than one tenth of the Palestinian families (11%) are headed by women, 12% in the West Bank and 9% in the Gaza Strip.²⁵ These indicators were not taken into account at the time of aid distribution to families.

On the other hand, the Corona pandemic affected housewives who work from their homes both in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. Most small women's projects faced existential challenge that questions their sustainability in light of the spread of the Coronavirus, especially with the comprehensive closure and almost total suspension of movement and all aspects of ordinary life; these women can no longer market their agricultural products or sell homemade food, and local bread, which consequently stopped their work.²⁶

Spotlight: Fears from the virus, economic hardship and quarantine regulations upsurge tensions at the household level, which aggravates women and children vulnerabilities and increases the risk of their exposure to forms of violence, including violence between spouses and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and mistreatment.

The Gaza Strip suffers from a prolonged shortage of safe places and recreational areas for children. Nowadays, more than 500,000 children spend their time at home with their mothers, and many of them play or work on the streets. Disorders and related stress factors that affect mental health increase the risks of children exposure to anxiety, trauma, psychological and social relapse, and widespread violence against children and women. (United Nations Report on the State of Emergency in Palestine)

²³ Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, see: <https://bit.ly/2CjM3Kk>

²⁴ COVID-19 Emergency Situation Report 5, Ocha, See: <https://bit.ly/2CfE7K0>

²⁵ Dr. Awad highlights the situation of the Palestinian women on the eve of the International Women's Day, a statement by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, see: <https://bit.ly/38zZSAi>

²⁶ The Corona virus undermines individual women entrepreneurs, the website of Arab 48, see: <https://bit.ly/3fe3PgC>

Third - The impact of the economic conditions on the social status of women

The impact of the comprehensive closure policy was not only reflected on the economic conditions, but extended to the social conditions as well. With women, girls, men and boys remaining at home, new functional dynamics emerged in a way that changed the sharing of roles at home due to a combination of economic, social and political factors compared to the period before the closure. For instance, in order to adapt to the comprehensive closure policies, masculine standards and traditional attitudes were unintentionally reinforced through males' control of women and girls with regard to freedom of movement or access to resources and public rights, in a way that thus normalizes the concept of having women remain at home to protect them at the family and community level.²⁷

Likewise, women employed in certain fields are requested to work remotely, which entails their (outside) work continued along with the burdens accumulating from within their homes. In the early periods of the quarantine, some private school resorted to online education for students, which was mostly the responsibility of mothers. All these burdens accumulate on women shoulders along with their responsibility for all family requirements. This negatively affected the psychological and social condition of women. A study prepared by UN Women showed that the comprehensive closure and closing of schools increased the burden of care on women and girls. This is particularly exhausting for women who are asked to work from home at a time they are also expected to take care of children and work at home, which puts excessive psychological and emotional pressure on them.²⁸

Spotlight: One of the additional risks women exposed to in light of pandemic is the health care sector itself as women constitute 60% of its work force. This exposes them, as well as men, to infection risks, on the one hand, along with increasing levels of isolation and abuse, on the other hand.

The percentage of female nurses amounts to 48% in the West Bank and Gaza, 55% in the West Bank and 48% in the Gaza Strip. As for mothers working in the health field, they are exposed to another unintentional suffering that came into being as a result of the closure of schools, in terms of their inability to have leave to take care of their children due to pressures on health systems, and at the same time, nurseries and kindergartens are shutdown to curb the outbreak of the pandemic.

²⁷ Report: How COVID-19 measures affect women, girls, men and boys differently, Ocha, See: <https://bit.ly/2AFojjf>

²⁸ UN agency warns of Corona pandemic' risks in terms of aggravating women vulnerabilities in Palestine, **Al-Ayyam Newspaper**, see: <https://bit.ly/3gAqaol>

All this has aggravated the intensity of violence against women since the outbreak of the pandemic in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Two women passed away because of psychological and physical violence and 21% of women attempted suicide. In addition, tens of women were subjected to psychological and physical violence.²⁹ According to the Psycho Social Counseling Center, gender-based violence consultations witnessed a 69% increase in different parts of the occupied Palestinian territory during the month of April as compared to March. As per Sawa Organization, a Palestinian non-governmental organization that operates a helpline, there was a 20% increase in calls related to cases of assault and violence on a weekly basis between the last week of March and April 9. In the week that followed this period, reports pointed to a 43% increase in these cases, 54 calls were received from women and 26 from men.³⁰

The economic and social pressures associated with restrictions on movement and social distancing measures underwent an increase due to the Corona pandemic. Discrimination in job roles, gender-based violence and gender-based violence increased exponentially. There are many women who were forced to adapt in view of the "general closure", and had to forcibly withstand staying at homes next to those who oppressed them, at a time victim support services became disrupted or inaccessible.

Fourth - Women's Initiatives during the emergency period

Notwithstanding the discrimination inflicted upon women during the state of emergency, whether by excluding them from taking part in curbing the pandemic, or by enhancing patriarchal control norms over them during the total closure period, women couldn't be prevented from assuming their role towards the society in relation to coping up with the pandemic. They embarked on designing awareness- enhancement programs and initiatives that involved different forms of moral and material support by both community and local institutions as well as by individual efforts in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Both male and female participants in this study unanimously endorsed the effectiveness of the initiatives that were grounded on national and social considerations. These initiatives managed to: enhance awareness of health risks associated with the epidemic; provide psychological and financial support; and follow up issues related to women such as violence, equality, and social justice within families. However, these initiatives were obstructed by quarantine regulations, ban of movement, and sometimes absence of governmental directives to facilitate women work on these initiatives, which resulted in delaying the implementation of some of them. We will discuss below examples of, but

²⁹ Corona increases the frequency of household violence...two death cases for two women, **Alhayat Aljadida Newspaper**, see: <https://bit.ly/2VZzTNr>

³⁰ Women in the Corona era, articles, Muhannad Abdelhamid, **Al-Ayyam Newspaper**, see: <https://bit.ly/2ZRuTvl>

not in full account, the initiatives that women launched, starting with institutional initiatives, and then review some of the individual initiatives:

First: Institutional Initiatives

Istabiqo Al-Khairat (rush to good deeds)... Women initiative to support the poor in Gaza in the Corona crisis: A group of women launched this in the south of the Gaza Strip. The women converted a part of the Women's Program Center in Rafah into a kitchen to prepare food for dozens of needy families whose status was affected by social distancing and home quarantine measures enforced to curb the spread of Corona virus. With the involvement of 9 volunteers working from their homes to cook 200 meals for distribution to targeted families, their work continued during the pandemic for three consecutive weeks.³¹

The initiative of Basmat Al-Khair (Goodness imprint) Association in Jenin Governorate: The Basmat Al-Khair Association in Jenin Governorate provided assistance to the neediest families to alleviate their distress, support their steadfastness, and meet their needs or parts of the needs. Following the cessation of the economic cycle due to the shutdown of factories, plants, workshops, groceries and small professional enterprises, a group of female employees and volunteers in the association provided assistance to families registered in the association prior to Corona outbreak; however, and with the deterioration of the health and economic conditions during Corona, many aid appeals were received from these families as well as from neighbors and friends of these families confirming their of help. Food packages including poultry and meat were provided on a continuous basis. In addition, some families requested supplies of chronic diseases medicines along with milk and diapers for children, while others appealed to pay their water and electricity bills.³²

MIFTAH supports women with packages that meet women needs during the state of emergency: As part of MIFTAH's efforts to support and empower women within the framework of its strategic approaches and in a way that achieves protection, justice and equity in the Palestinian society as well as promotes the principles of good governance, Miftah carried out women support and empowerment activities via its election support program and in cooperation and coordination with local councils members in eight governorates (Hebron, Nablus, Tulkarem, Jenin, Jerusalem, Jericho and the Jordan Valley, Bethlehem, Gaza Strip). These efforts aimed at strengthening the leadership role of local

³¹ Istabiqo Al-Khairat (rush to good deeds)... Women initiative to support the poor in Gaza in the Corona crisis, Website of Al Ain News Network, see: <https://bit.ly/2BG5Cws>

³² They excelled in the Corona era.... Women in the frontline, articles, Rola Salameh, see: <https://bit.ly/2ZKbQ6i>

councils' members and enhancing their social participation during the emergency period. 2000 packages were distributed in the governorates with an average of 250 packages in each governorate.

Nisa' Al-khair leahl al-khair" (Good women to good people) Initiative in Tulkarem: This Initiative was launched to provide meals to needy families during the month of Ramadan, and it was managed by the Women Department of Fateh Movement District in Tulkarem with the aim of coping up with the economic impacts of the Corona pandemic. During the month of Ramadan, feminist activists delivered these meals to the homes of the targeted families.³³

"Nurseries female workers stand for hope and life..." Initiative implemented in Al-Bireh, Al-Khader, Sabastia, Ya'bad and Sa'ir: The Women's Affairs Technical Committee and Al – Bireh Municipality launched the "Nurseries female workers stand for hope and life..." Initiative to support and assist women working in nurseries and kindergartens affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. During the campaign, food packages and financial aid were provided to 160 women working in nurseries and kindergartens in Al-Bireh. The initiative includes five regions: Al-Bireh, Al-Khader, Sabastia, Ya'bad and Sa'ir. The initiative came in the wake of complaints received by Women's Affairs Technical Committee from nursery workers, who were affected by the Corona pandemic. It is worthy to note that the economic conditions of nursery workers were difficult before the epidemic as the salaries they get are less than the minimum wage.³⁴

The initiative to distribute agricultural seedlings to women in Jenin: In continuation of the efforts of the Women's Affairs Technical Committee to support women in view of the pandemic, 8,000 agricultural seedlings were distributed to women in the town of Ya'bad. This initiative aimed at enhancing the role of women at the societal participation level; raising the economic level of the families by encouraging them to return to the land; and deepening citizens' love and belonging feelings to the land.³⁵

³³ Tulkarem Governor commends "Nisa' Al-khair leahl al-khair" (Good women to good people) Initiative, **Maan News Agency**, See: <https://bit.ly/3gCcM3j>

³⁴ Nurseries female workers stand for hope and life... Initiative by Women's Affairs Technical Committee and Al – Bireh Municipality in support of women working in nurseries and kindergartens, who suffered damages due to the Corona. Wattan News Agency, See: <https://bit.ly/2VUcexW>

³⁵ Distribution of seedlings in Jenin Governorate, the Facebook page of Women's Affairs Technical Committee, See: <https://bit.ly/2O9Cyja>

The Women Media and Development/ TAM provides 20 hygiene packages to Al – Walajeh Village: Civil society institutions continue to support Palestinian families under home quarantine, such as the Women Media and Development/ TAM, which had a role in the initiative to provide hygiene packages in Al – Walajeh village. The initiative aimed to achieve justice and equality between both sexes; provide food supplies such milk for children; and provide diapers for children and the elderly. As for the other part, it was provided by CARE International, which included hygienic supplies for families, such as cleaning and sterilization materials, masks, and medical gloves.³⁶ Today, 20 packages were delivered to the village of Al-Walajeh, west of Bethlehem, including cleaning materials, sterilization, masks, medical gloves, and other basic supplies.³⁷

“From Women to Women”... together we survive” initiative in Bethlehem: The Women’s Affairs Technical Committee carried out this campaign as part of its membership in Bethlehem Developmental Institutions Coalition and in partnership with seven institutions, namely Women Media and Development/ TAM, Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, the General Union of Palestinian Women, the Woman Daughter for Social Work and the Rural Women’s Development Society, and the Psycho Social Counseling Center for Women. This campaign aimed at supporting and backing the people of Bethlehem, particularly women heads of households, women who work on a daily wage basis, and women who became in need in light of the Corona pandemic. The campaign coincided with the International Labor Day anniversary and it involved supply of food baskets to those needy women and families.³⁸

Packages distribution initiative to families affected by the pandemic in Sabastia: As part of the Women Political and Social Participation’s Enhancement Project for five municipalities, the Women’s Affairs Technical Committee carried out the “We are all family” Initiative in partnership with Sabastia Municipality with support from noble people in the local community. 133 food packages were distributed to needy families affected by the Corona pandemic. The initiative aimed to enhance the role of women in meeting societal needs as well as to enhance women participation in emergency

³⁶ Providing hygiene packages to Al – Walajeh Village, Women Media and Development/ TAM’s Facebook page, See: <https://bit.ly/3gEbzst>

³⁷ Distributing 20 packages to Al – Walajeh Village. Women Media and Development/ TAM’s Facebook page, See: <https://bit.ly/2ZRAFgu>

³⁸ Food packages were distributed to women heads of households and women who work on a daily wage basis, the Facebook page of Women’s Affairs Technical Committee, See: <https://bit.ly/2O7JyNK>

committees, coupled with strengthening partnership among institutions and promoting social solidarity in view of the existing health situation.³⁹

“From Women to Women” initiative: The Psycho Social Counseling Center for Women in Bethlehem distributed 10 hygiene and safety packages to inmates in the protection shelter “MEHWAR and the girls’ shelter” (the Girls' Care Home and the Center for the Protection and Empowerment of Women and the Family “MEHWAR”). This initiative came in response to the damaged inflicted upon a large segment of families in the Palestinian society as a result of the spread of the Coronavirus, specifically families headed by women as well as women who work on a daily wage basis. The campaign involved distribution of 200 hygiene and safety packages funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and 168 food packages, coupled with cash assistance for 59 women. Also, and as part of its response to the current circumstances, the center has so far provided 146 psychological and legal consultations for women through the link of the “From women to women” campaign posted on the center's Facebook page.⁴⁰

Second: Individual initiatives

Basima and her friends, Ramallah and Al-Bireh: In the Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorate, Mrs. Basima is an active employee with many relationships with business and social personalities, companies and active women in the society. She tends to work with other friends on verifying stories and needy appeals that get through the social media, across many pages in the governorate and across local radios and different programs. They communicate with families and verify their needs, and then their journey begins to list the needs in order to provide for them through the network of relationships they have. They are a group of male and female friends who share concerns for the families and work on meeting their needs. Basima says she is so proud of her group and the increase in the number of members joining the group. They manage to help more than ninety families in the past two months in different areas of Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorate. The aid they provided had different forms, such as paying the homes rental fees for several months; providing medicine and respirators for some patients; and providing food, drink and milk to many families that suffered serious hardships and distress during Ramadan to the point they couldn’t afford to have a hot meal to break their fasting. “We were able,

³⁹ As part of Women Political and Social Participation’s enhancement project ,the Facebook page of Women’s Affairs Technical Committee, See: <https://bit.ly/3iKLedZ>

⁴⁰ “From Women to Women” initiative, a campaign launched by the Psycho Social Counseling Center for Women in Bethlehem, the page of the Center, See. <https://bit.ly/3fH0VVJ>

with God's help, to reach them and to help them; this feeling can never be described”, and she adds, "we are proceeding with this work; the group decided to carry on this humanitarian mission even after Corona, we have revival and triumph feelings together."

Safa Hassanat and her colleague, Mohamed Al-Helou from the Gaza Strip: She has initiated a voluntary charitable work since the Israeli aggression of 2008. Her work in the field of journalism enabled her to learn about the suffering of people and their needs. Since that time, she and her fellow journalist, Alaa Al-Helou, have worked not only in the field of journalism, but also in meeting people's needs. In this pandemic, she works on providing for the needs of people without being affiliated with any institution, association or organization. She relies entirely on fundraising from people to (other) people, through personal relationships with some well off persons within the Gaza Strip. The two colleagues also provide support to the needy families in the form of relief packages and different types of assistance, whether during the pandemic period or even after the end of the month of Ramadan. Her charitable voluntary work continues although the aid does not suffice to cover all needy families; she mainly targets poor and orphaned children in marginalized areas.⁴¹

Samia, young women and men of Jericho: In the Jericho governorate, we find the active young woman Samia with a group of young women and young men who got used to communicating with families in their governorate in order to learn about their needs, how they manage and then to follow up their conditions. Having good relations with the local community, they managed to attend to requests and to meet the needs of people in need. They have become very renowned in their governorate. In many instances, families approached them and asked for their intervention and assistance; thus, they become trustworthy to all.⁴²

Conclusions:

First - Political participation of women during the emergency period

The Corona pandemic constitutes an explicit criticism of the performance and discourse of the Palestinian political system that advocates equality and social justice in its statements and official occasions whereas the reality on the ground depicts the paradigm of the crisis in the Palestinian political system and the extent of overlaps among the three executive, legislative and judicial powers, on the one hand. It reflects, on the other hand, a blatant model of patriarchy and improvisation in decision-making as well as a violation

⁴¹ Individual initiatives in Gaza... "Intentions support the Jar", See: <https://bit.ly/30tOQZy>

⁴² They excelled in the Corona era.... Women in the frontline, articles, Rola Salameh, see: <https://bit.ly/2CrAWPB>

of international decisions and treaties that call for the elimination of discrimination and ensuring equality and social justice among all segments of society, including women.

The decision to form emergency committees did not take into account any legal basis, nor did it include any criteria for including members with certain academic qualifications or professional experience in the field of emergency management, women specifically.

The formation and management of emergency committees was neither based on a dynamic, effective plan capable of overcoming the crisis nor did it involve a specific program for crisis management. Moreover, coordination between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in coping up with the pandemic was affected by the split, which reflected negatively on the citizens there.

The statements and decisions of the government and ministries related to the response to the pandemic did not take into account the social perspective, the rules of partnership, and equality and social justice between women and men, in word and deed.

Before declaring the state of emergency, the government should have put forward a set of detailed standards and plans to implement quarantine regulations or comprehensive lockdown measures in a way that ensures all segments of the society, and women in particular, enjoy all their rights and freedoms, coupled with preventing offenses against them; safeguarding their rights pursuant to human rights principles and agreements ratified by the State of Palestine; and protecting the economic and social rights of the citizens.

Second - The economic consequences of the Corona pandemic on women

The decision to form emergency committees and to launch the Wakfet Izz Fund did not take into account gender issues in terms of the composition, and women were not represented in a manner consistent with the size of women's political and historical participation in the Palestinian national struggle, nor in accordance with social justice. The distribution of aid was not based on official reports and statistics that take into account the proportion of female heads of households, daily waged women, or women working as per limited term contracts, i.e. those women who were more vulnerable to poverty and extreme poverty.

The government did not provide compensation to women affected by the Corona pandemic, especially women with small entrepreneurial projects who run productive household projects (home production) or simple agricultural projects. In addition to restricting women's freedom of movement, the government did not provide them with

any economic and social protection during the closure period, nor did it safeguard them or the society from the interest of banks on loans and bounced cheques commissions.

Third - The impact of the economic conditions on the social status of women

The political exclusion of women was reflected on the social and economic reality during the pandemic period, as the lock-down required women to stay at home and consequently exercise their traditional roles within the family without any justice or equality in the distribution of tasks between both sexes. Men resumed exercising control on the grounds under the pretext of family and women protection, which doubled women tasks in terms of caring for children and meeting all needs of the family in addition to preventing their movement, stopping their work and cutting their salaries at other times.

Further vulnerability and fragility of women may upsurge if the current quarantine measures keep going on without concrete mechanisms and programs capable of safeguarding all segments of society, including women. It is likely to see an increase in cases of psychological and societal pressure on women, which could undermine a quarter of a century of feminist activities that strived to enhance the status of women as peers to their male counterparts. Expectations of further exclusion and violence are expected to increase in the future with the continuation of this arbitrary approach in coping up with pandemic in a way that would undermine the whole societal structure, including women.

Recommendations:

At the government level:

Demand a reconsideration of the principle of separation of the three powers and call for carrying out of all measures related to the pandemic in accordance with the legal provisions, coupled with addressing the split between the West Bank and Gaza and organizing general elections in order to reactivate the legislative council and the political system in general. Ending the split necessitates launching lobbying and advocacy campaigns throughout the West Bank and Gaza, whether electronic or in the field, with the participation of Palestinian factions, women's institutions, unions and syndicates until it is over.

Send a written message to the Prime Minister for reconsidering the government's discourse to assure harmony between theory and practice on the ground, coupled with stressing the importance of integrating the social perspective in the government's discourse and executive decisions in a way that ensures justice and societal equality between both sexes. The government should adopt a democratic discourse that promotes liberties and rights and guarantees pluralism and political participation of women in coping up with the pandemic.

The government should adopt a discourse that urges the citizens to protect women and vulnerable groups in the society; it should announce it in accordance with the effective law and should seek to impose maximum penalties on women's assaulters.

The formation of emergency committees as well as economic and social funds should be based on an unequivocally clear legal basis. Likewise, the formation of any national committee entails having competence and diversity based criteria in terms of experiences and knowledge in order that the right person is placed in the right place, in a way that ensures the integration of women's competencies in these committees in the different regions.

Expanding consultations channels with different parties to ensure that the needs of different segments of Palestinian society are taken into account when the government intends to formulate an emergency plan or enforce a comprehensive closure policy; to ensure the government has effective solutions for poor families before announcing such plans; and to ensure the government carries on due follow ups of the procedures taken to implement its decisions with utmost accuracy and transparency.

At the international level:

Follow up with international organizations working in democracy, human rights and gender issues on all human rights violations during the emergency period, with emphasis on women's rights, and to call upon them to deliver a message that urges the government to adopt policies that can address cases of violence, poverty, impoverishment and exclusion against women.

Carry on support of civil society institutions and the government to provide assistance and support programs to women and families affected by the pandemic, coupled with developing recovery programs on the ground that contribute to saving women and families from the cycle of poverty and violence.

Civil society organizations should:

Approach international institutions concerned with democracy, human rights and gender issues in order to put them in the full picture of all human rights violations during the emergency period, with emphasis on women's rights, and to call upon them to convey a message to the government urging it to undertake its policies towards women and society.

Seek, through the government, to have the distribution of social assistance arranged in coordination with women's institutions, unions and syndicates, based on official and accurate statistics at the time of aid distribution, starting with the groups mostly affected by the pandemic, including female heads of households whose work got disrupted, the neediest and then least needy families without any discrimination.

Pressure on the government to have all governmental, nongovernmental and private sectors institutions assume their social responsibilities towards the pandemic by involving them in determining the roles and responsibilities, i.e. making donations, directing support programs towards marginalized groups, including women, and coordinating efforts aimed to revoke interests and commissions imposed on women and individuals due to delay in bank loans repayments and bounced / returned checks, in a way that ensures the continuity of small projects and protect women economically.

Bibliography

Women Media and Development/ TAM (2020). Providing hygiene packages to AI – Walajeh Village, excerpts dated (9-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/3gEbzst>

Women Media and Development/ TAM (2020). Distributing 20 packages to AI – Walajeh Village. Women Media and Development/ TAM's Facebook page , excerpts dated (9-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2ZRAFgu>

Aliqtisadi (2020). Wakfet Izz Fund provides 30,000 families with an amount NIS 500 each, excerpts dated (08-07-2020): <https://bit.ly/3eclYU0>

United Nations (2020). COVID-19 Impact on Women and Girls Policy Brief, excerpts dated (05-07-2020): <https://bit.ly/2ZT6mGi>

OCHA (2020). Report: How COVID-19 measures affect women, girls, men and boys differently, excerpts dated (05-07-2020), see: <https://bit.ly/2AFojjf>

OCHA (2020). COVID-19 Emergency Situation Report 5, excerpts dated (08-07-2020), See: <https://bit.ly/2CfE7K0>

Aljazeera (2020). The economic effects of Corona... Women are the first to pay the price, Aljazeera, excerpts dated (05-07-2020): <https://bit.ly/3e7REk4>

Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (2020), the Periodical Report of Shadow Councils, excerpts dated (05-07-2020): : <https://bit.ly/31U0SOk>

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2019), Dr. Awad highlights the status of the Palestinian women on the eve of the International Women's Day, excerpts dated (08-07-2020): <https://bit.ly/38zZSAi>

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2018), Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics, excerpts dated (05-07-2020): <https://bit.ly/2CjM3Kk>

Alhayat Aljadida Newspaper (2020) Corona increases the frequency of household violence... two death cases of two women, excerpts dated (02-07-2020): <https://bit.ly/2VZzTnr>

Palestine Monetary Authority (2020). Coping up with the Corona crisis., excerpts dated (06-07-2020): <https://bit.ly/32xfW4L>

Palestinian Network for Press and Media (2020), Al Deek: The Ministry of Social Development starts listing the new poor in Palestine, excerpts dated (02-07-2020) : <https://bit.ly/3jeezxZ>

Maan News Network (2020), was Corona a gateway to uncover discrimination between women and men, excerpts dated (02-07-2020): <https://bit.ly/2DmO60A>

Nawa News Network (2020), Individual initiatives in Gaza... “Intentions support the Jar”, excerpts dated (05-07-2020): <https://bit.ly/30tOQZy>

Al-Ayyam Newspaper (2020), Women in the Corona era, articles, Muhannad Abdelhamid, Al-Ayyam Newspaper, excerpts dated (2-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2ZRuTvI>

Al-Ayyam Newspaper (2020), UN Women warns of Corona pandemic’ risks in terms of aggravating women vulnerabilities in Palestine, excerpts dated (3-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/3gAqaol>

Wakfet Izz Fund (2020), Wakfet Izz Fund’s Management Team, excerpts dated (4-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/38Hc02j>

Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (2020), distribution of seedlings in Jenin Governorate, the Facebook page of Women’s Affairs Technical Committee, excerpts dated (6-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2O9Cyja>

Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (2020), distribution of food packages to female heads of households and women who work on a daily wage basis, excerpts dated (8-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2O7JyNK>

Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (2020), as part of Women Political and Social Participation’s Enhancement Project, news, excerpts dated (5-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/3iKLedZ>

Arab 48 (2020), the Corona virus undermines individual women entrepreneurs, reports, excerpts dated (9-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/3fe3PgC>

Al Ain News Network (2020), Istabiqo Al-Khairat (rush to good deeds)... Women Initiative was launched to support the poor in Gaza in the Corona period, reports, excerpts dated (7-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2BG5Cws>

Psycho Social Counseling Center for Women (2020), “From Women to Women” Initiative, a campaign launched by the Psycho Social Counseling Center for Women, reports, excerpts dated (6-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/3fHOWVJ>

The Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) (2020), COVID-19 Pandemic: Impacts and coping strategies among Palestinians, excerpts dated (8-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/31T4JLz>

Nisaa FM Radio station (2020). Sawt (Voice): Barnamej Qareeb (Nearby Program) discusses the economic impact of the corona virus, excerpts dated (17-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2CeUGKH>

The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) (2020), A position paper on the emergency committees’ formation in the context of curbing the corona virus, excerpts dated (3-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/3iE68eS>

The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) (2020), The MoSD issues a statistical bulletin of violence- related victimized women whose cases were addressed during the first quarter of the year 2020, excerpts dated (17-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2OtGVWB>

Women News Agency (2020). Palestine. The outbreak of the Corona Pandemic undermines individual women entrepreneurships, excerpts dated (7-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/3jsyQjo>

Maan News Network (2020). They excelled in the Corona era.... Women in the frontline, articles, excerpts dated (7-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2ZKbQ6i>

Maan News Network (2020). Tulkarem Governor commends “Nisa’ Al-khair leahl al-khair” (Good women to good people) Initiative, excerpts dated (6-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/3gCcM3j>

Wattan News Agency (2020). Nurseries female workers stand for hope and life... Initiative by Women’s Affairs Technical Committee and Al –Bireh Municipality in support of nurseries and kindergartens female employees, who suffered damages due to the Corona. excerpts dated (6-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2VUcexW>

Wattan News Agency (2020). The emergency committees need rectification; they should not substitute the bodies of the state; and the extension of the state of emergency violates the law, excerpts dated (4-7-2020) <https://bit.ly/38ByBNT>

Palestine News & Info Agency (Wafa) (2020): 50% of women heading households benefited from the financial aid provided during the corona pandemic, excerpts dated (7-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2WeMwVh>

Palestine News & Info Agency (Wafa) (2020): The Ministry of Local Government: Launching a voluntary campaign to support the enforcement of the state of emergency in local councils. excerpts dated (3-7-2020): <https://bit.ly/2ZzekFT>