

## Towards a National Comprehensive Plan for the Protection of Women against Violence



Established in December 1998, **MIFTAH**'s aim is to serve as a Palestinian platform for global dialogue and cooperation guided by the principles of democracy, human rights, gender equity, and participatory governance. To this end, **MIFTAH** undertakes the pro-active generation and presentation of policy proposals and the focused dissemination of reliable information. **MIFTAH** has established the cogency of its positions in Palestine and in the region, and has formulated long and short-term policies and strategies to deal with particular pressing issues. Through networking with like-minded organizations locally, regionally and internationally, and with Palestinian expatriate communities, **MIFTAH** has forged lasting relationships and partnerships in pursuit of a common vision of dialogue and democracy.

**MIFTAH**'s project Advocacy for Reproductive Health is a component of **MIFTAH**'s program of Empowerment of Palestinian Women Leadership and is implemented in coordination with the UNFPA.

The First Issue  
Published in October 2005

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy – **MIFTAH**  
Jerusalem: Beit Hanina, Main St., Qadoumi Bldg., 1<sup>st</sup> Floor.  
Tel: 972 2 585 1842, Fax: 972 2 583 5184  
Ramallah: Al Massayef St., Rimawi Bldg., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor.  
Tel: 972 2 298 9490, Fax: 972 2 298 9492  
P.O.Box 69647, Jerusalem 95908  
E-Mail: info@miftah.org  
Website: www.miftah.org

## Facts on Violence against Women in Palestine



## Facts on Violence against Women in Palestine

The Palestinian Society is in a state of denial that gender-based violence against women exists within it. To date, there is no national documentation or data showing the number of cases where violent acts have been committed against women. The only cases which have been documented are those which were recorded through studies conducted by neutral organizations or individuals who work with victims of violence.

The International Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, issued by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 20 1993, defined violence against women as *Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.*

This same definition had been adopted by the Fourth International Woman Conference in Peking in 1995 which states, *Violence against women is any gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivation of liberty, whether that occurs in public or in private life .*

Violence against women is not an inevitable or natural act, but rather an expression of certain values and standards related to a specific behavior and culture, which requires great efforts to fight against it and to work towards changing it.

The following statistics and data included in this report indicate the existence of gender-based violence in the Palestinian society, but not necessarily reflect the actual size of the problem. This is especially true since the Palestinian culture perceives violence against women as “a family affair issue or a private issue.” For this reason, as mentioned above, the statistics do not necessarily reflect the size of the problem but may serve as indicators that the problem does exist.

## Patterns of violence against women in Palestine:

Despite the absence of national documentation on the number of women killed based on the “honor” concept, or better known as tarnishing “men’s honor or the family honor,” the Women Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, recorded 31 such cases during the year 2003.

- The results of a survey conducted by Bisan Center for Development and Research in 1995, showed that 35% of Palestinian surveyed women had been subjected to mental and verbal violence repeatedly; 21% to physical violence; 9% to severe physical violence; 7% of the girls interviewed indicated that they had experienced sexual abuse by one of their brothers; and 4% raped by the father.

- Two surveys conducted by Bisan Center in 1998, 1999 showed that 21%- 23% of the women were forced to have sexual intercourse with their husbands during the course of one year which preceded the survey.

- Results of a survey on violence, conducted by the Women Affairs Center in Gaza for the year 2001, showed the husbands to be the primary source of violence in 97% of the cases.

- The survey on violence conducted by Women Affairs Center in Gaza in 2001 showed that 10.5% of the violence against women comes from their in-laws (i.e., parents of husbands).

- The survey on violence conducted by Women Affairs Center in Gaza in 2001 showed a definite correlation between violence and marriage to close relatives. The study showed that 16.5% of the women married to first cousins have been subjected to violence by different family members compared to 12.9% for women married within the same clan (hamoulah), and 10.3% for those married from another clan (i.e., no relations).

- The survey on violence conducted by Women Affairs Center in Gaza in 2001 showed that violence is more frequent among young couples than older ones. The study showed that the average age for husbands who commit violence against their wives is 22 while the age for the subjected women is 18. According to the study, this clearly indicates that early marriages are one of the most important factors that may lead to family violence.

- Unemployment, death, imprisonment of a family member provided a fertile environment to instigate violence against women within the family.

- According to a study conducted in 2004, 19.6% of pregnant women in Jerusalem between the ages of 20 to 29 years have been subjected to violence. It is worthy to note that 45% of those women were in the third trimester of their pregnancy when violated.

- Psychological violence is the most common abuse used against women in Gaza with 51.5%, followed by physical violence which constitutes 46%.

- According to a study conducted by the Women Affairs Center, 1995, women in Gaza suffer from the highest rate of physical, mental, sexual and economic violence.

- According to a survey conducted by the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics in 2003, a reversal relationship is found between age and physical violence; the percentage of violence becomes lower among both sexes as they progress in age. While violence between males and females between the age 10-11 years of age indicates an increase of 4.6% among boys.

## Rate of Violence among the youth during the month preceding the survey:

Age	Rate of violence		
	Males	Females	Both Genders
10-11	19.4%	24%	21.6%
12-14	17.2%	15.3%	16.2%
15-19	11.2%	7.2%	9.2%
20-24	6.9%	2.9%	5%

Reference: Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, Youth Survey, 2003

- In 2001 a study conducted by the Women Center for Legal Aid and Counseling showed that for three consecutive years 1996-1998, 234 women lost their lives to “Fate.” The number varied from one year to another and from one geographical area to another as follows: Ramallah area took first place in 1996 with Nablus taking first place for the following two years (1997-1998). Compared with the number of deaths recorded by the police, one discovers the vast disparity which shows police records not to exceed 33 cases for the first year and decreased each year thereafter.

- Although it is traditionally known that the home is the kingdom of the wife, one third of the women who participated in the survey conducted by Bisan Center for Development and Research do not possess the right to decide on how money is spent. This is an indicator among many which should be considered in future surveys to measure the effect of men’s economic control in the family.

- The increasing cycle of political violence practiced by the Israeli occupation contributed to the cycle of violence against women. Poverty, unemployment, bad living conditions, inability to access health services and other services, all played a role in this vicious circle. Opportunities rapidly decreased as a result of the prevailing state of insecurity where there is no respect for human rights. The mental, social, and economic pressures had a negative impact especially on women since they lack the resources which they can benefit from. Men also suffer from frustration as a result of their inability to play their traditional role as bread-winners for their families.

## Discrimination against women in job opportunities and decision making positions is one type of gender-based violence.

There is a hidden mental and social violence against women in official and unofficial organizations. This discrimination is depicted in job opportunities, decision making positions in organizations and in the different sectors of society as well as in the enforcement of rules and regulations, which are clearly biased in favor of men. In order to build a healthy and productive society, all faces of violence should be dealt with including better and more equal legislative laws which grant women equal rights.

## Stop violence against Women

- The need to adopt a new Palestinian law which enforces penalties against those who commit violence against women. The law should aim at eradicating violence against women based on international human rights standards including those basic principles which do not discriminate between genders where it comes to family violence and the protection of victims.

- The present Palestinian law does not include any text regarding incriminating husbands who rape their wives. It is known that sexual intercourse against the woman’s will may result in an unwanted pregnancy in addition to contributing to her fear and insecurity of not having control over her body.

- There is a need to enhance methods of research and to publish reliable information regarding the issue of family violence, violence against women and the “honor killing” crimes.

- There is a need to develop the mechanism which support cases in courts related to family violence and violence against women. This mechanism is to guarantee the rights of the victims of violence who cannot fend for themselves.