

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE PALESTINIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

This study addresses the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) within Palestinian society during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting how emergency conditions significantly exacerbated women's suffering. The research emphasizes that violence against women in Palestine is deeply rooted in cultural and social structures characterized by male dominance and systemic gender inequality. The COVID-19 pandemic and preventive measures such as lockdowns created the "quarantine paradox," where necessary restrictions to curb virus spread simultaneously increased domestic violence and social isolation for women, leaving many trapped with their abusers. Despite women's vital role in managing the pandemic through caregiving and labor, their efforts were largely unrecognized, and they faced increased psychological and physical violence. Ongoing Israeli occupation and political and economic pressures further heightened women's vulnerability, limiting their freedom of movement and access to social services.

The study analyzes the response of Palestinian government institutions, UN agencies, and civil society in combating GBV during the crisis, revealing gaps in implementation, inadequate support, and prevention efforts. It also points out cultural and legal challenges, including delays in the approval of the Family Protection Law and misunderstandings regarding the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The study concludes that comprehensive structural and cultural reforms are required to promote women's rights, incorporate equality values into educational curricula, and ensure women's effective participation in decision-making, especially during emergencies. Addressing the deeply embedded patriarchal culture that perpetuates violence and discrimination is essential for achieving justice and equality in Palestinian society.

Keywords: Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Violence Against Women, Palestine, COVID-19 Pandemic, Domestic Violence, Patriarchal Culture, Women's Rights, Legal Protection, Role of Government Institutions United Nations, Organizations, Civil Society, Israeli Occupation, Social Protection, Women's Issues in Emergencies, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a complex and deeply sensitive issue within Arab cultures. Women across all societies have suffered from GBV for decades, as societal structures and entrenched male supremacy continue to create formidable barriers to reducing male dominance and achieving gender equality. As a researcher, it is essential to examine the intricate interplay between historical, political, economic, and cultural dynamics that sustain GBV. Rather than attributing GBV to any single factor, it is more accurate to understand it as the product of multiple intertwined elements that collectively complicate efforts toward resolution. On one hand, international human rights frameworks and conventions strive to regulate and mitigate this violence. On the other, actual practices and grassroots struggles against discrimination and violence reveal the ongoing challenges women face in achieving true protection and equality. This study focuses on gender-based violence in Palestine during emergency situations, with particular emphasis on the COVID-19 pandemic, during which GBV emerged as one of the most neglected consequences.

The COVID-19 crisis exposed the patriarchal dominance embedded in leadership decisions and exacerbated the marginalization of women, who were already vulnerable prior to the pandemic. This research will foreground the cultural context of GBV while critically examining the responses of governmental and non-governmental institutions to this emergency. It will also explore the "quarantine paradox[1]": the tension between necessary lockdown measures to contain the virus and the resulting rise in psychological and social harm among vulnerable groups, especially women.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The World Health Organization has warned that physical or sexual violence against women constitutes a global health epidemic, affecting over one-third of all women worldwide[2]. While various conflict resolution theories debate the origins of violence—some suggesting it is inherent in human nature (realism) and others that it develops gradually through social identity processes—this research focuses on the practical realities of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic within the Palestinian context, rather than a comprehensive theoretical analysis.

One critical issue during the pandemic was the imposition of compulsory lockdowns, sometimes described as a “double pandemic” in Palestine, where the COVID-19 crisis compounded the hardships of the ongoing Israeli occupation. This dual pressure created particularly dire circumstances for women, who bore the brunt of job losses and diminished livelihood opportunities. The burden of increased domestic responsibilities and caregiving duties fell disproportionately on women, intensifying their physical and emotional stress.

Paradoxically, despite their vital societal roles, women’s efforts during the pandemic were met with little recognition or appreciation. Many women found themselves confined with their abusers, isolated from support networks, while simultaneously navigating the additional political challenges imposed by the occupation. These intersecting crises severely restricted women’s freedom of movement and access to social services, leaving many feeling unsafe, vulnerable, and trapped in abusive situations—sometimes to the extent that their lives were at risk.

Given this stark reality, it is imperative to shed light on the gendered dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic in Palestine, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted interventions to support and protect women during such compounded emergencies.

Conventional and Procedural Definitions

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is fundamentally rooted in systemic gender inequality, the abuse of power, and harmful social norms that perpetuate discrimination. GBV is recognized as a serious violation of human rights as well as a critical health and protection issue[3], with life-threatening consequences for victims.

The United Nations defines gender-based violence as any act 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 deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” This definition highlights the multifaceted nature of GBV, encompassing both direct violence and its psychological impacts, and acknowledges its occurrence across all spheres of life[4].

Feminism represents a diverse range of social movements, ideologies, and theoretical perspectives dedicated to achieving political, economic, personal, and social equality between the sexes. Central to feminist thought is the critique of societal structures that prioritize the male perspective and systematically treat women unjustly. Feminism thus seeks to challenge and transform these inequities to establish equal rights and opportunities for all genders[5].

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research is to examine and explore gender-based violence (GBV) within Palestinian society—specifically in the West Bank—during the COVID-19 pandemic, approached through a feminist lens. The study aims to:

- Uncover the foundations of structural violence and its consequences for gender inequality from a feminist perspective.
- Recognize the critical role played by women during the Coronavirus pandemic and emphasize the paradox whereby their significant efforts culminated in increased exposure to violence.
- Highlight the roles and effectiveness of governmental and non-governmental institutions in addressing violence against women during the epidemic.
- Analyze the responses of United Nations agencies in relation to civil society organizations in Palestine throughout the pandemic.
- Provide a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon as experienced by women from diverse social segments and examine its broader impacts.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main Question:

1. Is there a direct relationship between gender-based violence and the social construction of Arab societies, particularly in Palestine? How has this relationship been interpreted and articulated from a feminist perspective during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-questions:

2. In light of deep-rooted structural violence and its effects on gender during the pandemic, how did fundamental violence manifest, and what system of values has enabled the perpetuation or exposure of violence in emergency situations within Palestine?
3. What role has the Palestinian government played, and how prepared has it been, to respond to gender-based violence during crises such as the pandemic?
4. How did United Nations institutions operationalize their mandates to combat discrimination and oppression against women during the pandemic, particularly in cooperation with Palestinian civil society organizations?

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to examine gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic in Palestine. Given the novelty of the pandemic context and the complexity of GBV, the researcher adopts a communicative methodology grounded in dialogical interaction, facilitating in-depth understanding through conversation and engagement with participants.

The data sources include a thorough review and analysis of scholarly articles, emergency response reports (both governmental and non-governmental), and documents related to the COVID-19 outbreak and GBV prevention efforts. Due to limited resources, the study primarily relies on primary data from these reports, supplemented by secondary literature to provide contextual background.

The research sample consists of key informants such as UN officials and human rights lawyers, who provide multilayered perspectives essential for a comprehensive analysis of GBV in the Palestinian context during the pandemic. Interviews with these participants were conducted virtually, using online communication platforms, due to health and mobility restrictions during the pandemic.

The study focuses predominantly on GBV as it emerged and intensified under pandemic conditions, aiming to analyze its causes, effects on vulnerable groups, and the roles played by various stakeholders in combating it. This is complemented by documentary analysis of theoretical literature and empirical reports relevant to the subject.

As a conflict resolution specialist, the researcher integrates a theoretical framework that informs the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Additionally, the research draws on real-life narratives and daily experiences from different segments of Palestinian society, enriching the analysis.

The core methodological approach is phenomenological, which seeks to describe, understand, and interpret the lived experiences of individuals affected by GBV during COVID-19. This approach centers on the meanings and essences of these experiences from the perspectives of the women who lived them. For instance, interviews with the SAWA 24/7 emergency hotline service provided insights into the personal realities of survivors during lockdown.

Unlike quantitative methods that focus on statistics or broader sociopolitical analyses, the phenomenological approach prioritizes engaging directly with individuals' experiences to uncover the underlying structures and meanings of those experiences[6]. Confidentiality and ethical considerations are paramount, ensuring the privacy and safety of participants.

Furthermore, the research incorporates a qualitative case study design to explore GBV within its real-life Palestinian context. This involves collecting data from diverse sources, including women residing in shelter houses, to develop a nuanced and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in its complexity.

One significant challenge encountered in this study is the cultural stigma, shame, and fear surrounding GBV in Palestinian society, which often discourages women from disclosing their suffering. This cultural barrier posed difficulties for the researcher in applying the case study approach and engaging participants openly.

Despite these challenges, this methodology provides a rich, contextualized insight into the experiences of women facing GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic in the West Bank, emphasizing their voices and lived realities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher adopts a feminist perspective as the central analytical lens of this study. This approach aligns with universal human rights principles, advocating for justice, equality, and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and oppression against women. It emphasizes the protection of women's rights across all domains—economic, social, cultural, civil, and political—with particular focus on their fundamental right to live in dignity and freedom within Palestinian society. As a case study, this paper seeks to fulfill that core objective.

The researcher frames gender-based violence (GBV) as a crisis, underlining the importance of moral values from both feminist and constructivist perspectives. This dual approach aims to bridge the gap between entrenched structural beliefs and contemporary ideals in Arab societies. It aspires to foster mutual respect and shared interests grounded in gender equality, while resisting the entrenched power imbalances of patriarchal and stereotypical ideologies.

Additionally, the study integrates a communicative methodology, considering the narratives and voices of individuals affected by GBV. These accounts are examined in the context of Johan Galtung's theory of structural violence, which offers a powerful framework for understanding how institutions and societal structures can inflict harm and inhibit individuals from meeting their basic needs and achieving equality.

Gender-based violence, as a subject of academic and social concern, is not new. Women have endured various forms of violence for decades. As Vivian C. Fox states in *Historical Perspectives on Violence Against Women*: [7] "Three great bodies of thought have influenced Western society's views and treatment of women: Judeo-Christian religious ideas, Greek philosophy, and the Common Law legal code."

Each of these traditions has historically upheld male dominance as the societal norm, rendering violence against women a culturally legitimized expression of patriarchal authority. While the COVID-19 pandemic reignited and intensified these injustices, the underlying structural inequalities and gendered oppression have long existed.

This study highlights multiple facets of violence against women, tracing their evolution over time. It is firmly rooted in feminist ideology, which demands gender equality and the restoration of rights long denied to women—rights that men have freely exercised and often taken for granted.

Finally, the discussion of GBV is inseparable from Galtung's concept of structural violence. Developed in the 1960s, this theory explains how social institutions—be they economic, political, legal, cultural, or medical—can systematically harm marginalized groups. Structural violence manifests through forms such as classism, sexism, nationalism, and racism, reinforcing societal hierarchies and obstructing true equality among citizens.

Foundation of Structural Violence and its Impact during COVID-19

"The most dangerous violence is internal—domestic and societal." [8]

This powerful assertion reflects the deeply entrenched patriarchal culture within Palestinian society, where systemic discrimination against women has led to a profound imbalance of power. This imbalance grants men dominant control, enabling them to deny women their rights and freedoms across multiple dimensions of life—social, economic, cultural, and political.

Among the most alarming forms of societal violence perpetrated against Palestinian women during the COVID-19 pandemic were the legal and cultural frameworks that permitted the killing of women while allowing perpetrators to escape justice. [9] Although femicide remains a critical and persistent issue, women also continue to suffer from other violent acts—physical, psychological, verbal, sexual abuse, and early marriage—which collectively undermine their well-being and security.

Despite some progress over the years [10] in combating discrimination and violence against women, many aspects of women's lives—including health, economic participation, and sociopolitical involvement—remain constrained by deep-rooted discriminatory values. [11] The pandemic intensified these inequalities. As patriarchal norms tightened their grip, power dynamics shifted further in favor of men, who monopolized decision-making processes. This shift prolonged human rights violations and amplified the violence women experienced [12].

While these issues did not originate with the COVID-19 lockdowns, they were significantly exacerbated during the stay-at-home mandates. Historically, violence against women in Arab societies has been widespread and systematic—Palestine being no exception. This phenomenon transcends religion, class, ethnicity, or any single social group; it is embedded in all facets of life and acts as a substantial barrier to both societal development and the personal advancement of women [13].

Violence against women is fueled by male-dominated structures within a patriarchal system that consolidates power among men. This is especially evident in policymaking and decision-making circles, where women's roles are often dismissed or restricted—usually on the basis of biological and gendered assumptions. Women's exclusion from public participation and their isolation from community life represent a calculated form of control, systematically diminishing their influence [14].

The escalation of violence during the quarantine period was largely a result of forced proximity in homes already strained by poor or abusive gender relations. As activists have observed, many women previously endured toxic or violent relationships but could escape for part of the day by going to work or visiting others. Quarantine eliminated those outlets, trapping women with their abusers. In many cases, even women who had not previously experienced violence became victims under these conditions [15].

The burden on women during this period was compounded by additional responsibilities, particularly as schools transitioned to e-learning. Women were expected not only to monitor their children's attendance and performance but also to provide a conducive educational environment—often without adequate resources or support.

Furthermore, the economic toll of the pandemic significantly increased family pressures. Job losses and mounting debts resulted in a rise in economic violence, especially against divorced, unemployed, or marginalized women. With courts paralyzed by the pandemic, women found it increasingly difficult to access justice or receive the financial support they were legally entitled to. The failure to enforce court decisions further deepened their economic suffering.

Governmental Response and Limitations

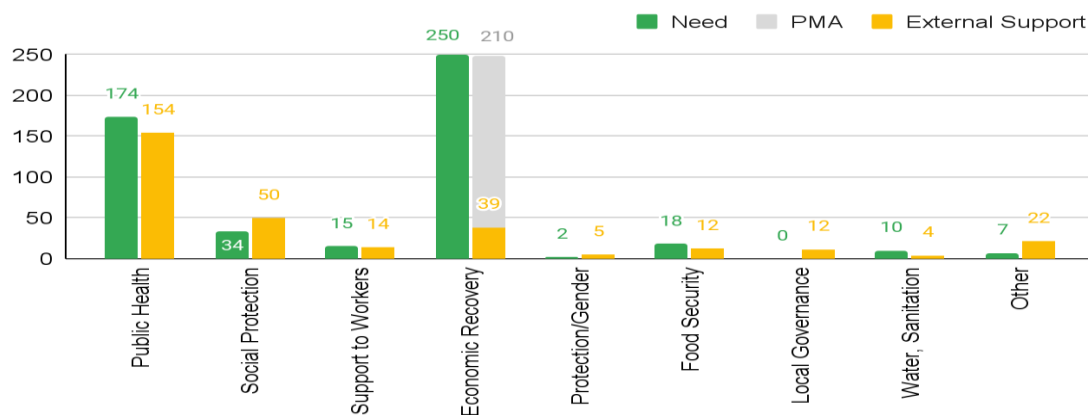
During the initial phase of declaring a state of emergency, there were no clear procedures or risk management plans in place to guide service providers in responding swiftly to the exceptional circumstances faced by women—particularly regarding access to shelters.[16] One service provider explained: “There were delays in transfers to safe houses. In some cases, it was too late for the victim to receive any assistance because we stopped outreach services. There was huge damage, especially in vulnerable areas.”[17]

In emergency situations, the most critical and effective interventions are those made within the early hours. Unfortunately, no concrete plans existed to enable rapid responses. Once delayed, such interventions often lose their effectiveness. A practitioner noted: “Palestinians are not skilled in emergency intervention; we work in these cases using our usual pattern. We carry on business as usual rather than operating with a disaster risk management mindset.”[18]

One of the most alarming challenges identified was the severe lack of budget allocated to the gender sector. This already marginalized, cross-sectorial area historically relied heavily on funding from international partners. However, during the pandemic, governmental efforts shifted priority and resources to the health sector. While other sectors also faced funding reallocations, the gender sector was uniquely vulnerable due to its dependence on international aid. As one interviewee put it: “The poor become poorer, and the hidden got revealed!”[19]

The study also uncovered a critical gap in national emergency planning and response: gender-specific needs were consistently placed at the bottom of the priority list. Rather than being addressed with urgency, gender concerns within the emergency response committees remained sidelined and marginalized.

CHART: COVID-19 NEEDS AND SUPPORT IN 2020 (USD MILLIONS)



Source: Prime Minister's Office (PMO) COVID-19 Database. ‘Other’ refers to support not able to be classified, or from several smaller categories e.g. Education. (The Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA) provided USD 210 million in support for Economic Recovery.)[19]

Rather than receiving the necessary attention during the pandemic,[20] services essential to women's protection—such as counseling, social support, and legal assistance—were significantly reduced. It is crucial to emphasize that issues related to domestic and structural violence were not prioritized within governmental response plans to confront the pandemic[19].

The closure of civil and Sharia courts further obstructed the administration of justice. This hindered the fulfillment of women's legal and economic rights and had a profound impact on their overall well-being. Notably, Palestinian women had already suffered from a lack of adequate legal support prior to the pandemic; this situation only worsened during the crisis.

Economic hardship led many abused women to remain in violent environments. Without a personal income or financial support for their children, they were left with no viable alternatives. Compounding the problem, these women lacked accessible information from official authorities on how to seek help. Fear of retaliation and skepticism toward government procedures only deepened their reluctance to report abuse.

The suspension of court operations denied survivors of gender-based violence the ability to pursue custody or financial claims. This was exacerbated by the absence of viable legal alternatives or enforcement mechanisms. In some instances, abusive spouses refused to return children to their mothers' custody, and because imprisonment orders were not being issued or enforced during the pandemic, women had no recourse through the police or judiciary.

Although this study does not delve into a detailed legal analysis, it is evident that a complex matrix of culturally ingrained norms[21] reinforced by legal structures[22] has contributed to leniency in punishing gender-based violence. This leniency, in effect, emboldened perpetrators and perpetuated violence by eliminating consequences: violence flourished in a system where there was no real price to pay.

United Nations and Civil Society Engagement

According to SAWA's five weekly hotline reports, post-crisis data revealed a 20% increase in calls related to mental health, psychosocial support, and abuse/violence cases. Notably, a significant proportion of these calls came from young men and adolescent boys who had been abused within their households—by fathers, mothers, or siblings. Following the extension of hotline hours, calls from women requesting assistance rose from 40% to 58% of total calls, indicating that women had previously lacked the time, privacy, or safe conditions to seek help. Among these, reports of abuse and domestic violence by intimate partners increased by 38%.[23].

According to United Nations officials, Palestinian women encountered severe challenges in accessing essential services during the pandemic. Lockdown measures, especially in the initial stages of the crisis, severely restricted the provision of assistance to survivors of GBV, compounding their suffering. Even before the outbreak, UNFPA had acknowledged a chronic lack of capacity and a limited number of service providers able to meet women's needs.

In response, UN agencies and civil society organizations supported both governmental and non-governmental institutions through the distribution of "dignity kits"[24] emergency packages containing feminine hygiene and sanitary products. These were delivered primarily via the Ministry of Social Development, which was tasked with overseeing this operation. In addition, legal aid and GBV-related health counseling were provided remotely to at-risk women.

Social counselors also operated remotely via hotlines or digital means, depending on each case. However, many institutions were forced to cease operations entirely due to funding shortages[19] a crisis exacerbated by governmental inaction. The lack of governmental financial support played a significant role in the systemic collapse of vital services during a time of critical need.

One harrowing example that illustrates the intersection of poverty, marginalization, and systemic failure is the case of a girl who had been sexually assaulted by family members. After receiving a financial grant of 700 shekels (roughly \$200), she fled the shelter, believing this sum would be sufficient to resolve her suffering. Her decision reflects not only her desperation but also the failure of social systems to provide holistic, long-term support for marginalized women in patriarchal societies. It starkly underscores the absence of educational and economic empowerment frameworks necessary for true rehabilitation[26].

UN agencies eventually began providing cash assistance midway through the pandemic, which in some cases proved more relevant than the dignity kits. Yet even this support was delayed, inconsistent, and insufficient. The cash provided—typically around \$200 per case[27]. Which did not meet the long-term needs of many fragile cases. Moreover, the UN refrained from formally reporting the crisis to the UN Security Council as an emergency, opting instead to offer internal aid while neglecting to confront the broader structural problems.

Priority was given to supporting health professionals in the fight against the virus. UN Women worked on needs assessments and procedural frameworks; however, implementation remained weak, and coordination between the UN and the Palestinian government was fragmented. The result was a noticeable gap between planning and execution.

A particularly grave failure was the closure of counseling clinics within primary healthcare facilities, under the rationale that "all human power and capacity should be redirected toward battling the virus." From a feminist perspective, this decision was indefensible and must be condemned. It erased years of progress made by civil society and international organizations, particularly in the area of psychosocial recovery. Many women who had begun healing processes were left without support, resulting in a surge in suicide attempts[28] reaching the highest levels in years[29] and highlighting the urgent need for new coping mechanisms.

Finally, it must be noted that **all five shelters** in the West Bank were, at one point, **entirely without funding**. These centers, which represent a last resort for many women, were even unable to provide basic necessities such as food.

Literature Review

Upon reviewing several studies on GBV, the researcher recognized that disorder and imbalance exacerbate the situation of women. Although gender violence was an issue before quarantine, yet social isolation worsens relations, increases conflicts, and turns it into a harsher social issue.

The COVID-19 crisis revealed the hidden trauma tolerated in society, and it exposed the visibility of violence against women: Even if implicitly, it is deep-rooted within the Arab context and Palestine. The researcher found that the number of studies on GBV in this context is largely limited and not sufficiently analyzed. Often, it is deemed as taboo that society won't reveal or talk about.

The researcher aimed to shed the light on GBV through this study, to reach an understating of the dilemma in Palestine and focus on the key achieved aspects in this context.

Some of the previous studies that were reviewed for this paper include:

The book, *Violence Against Women, Between the Dominance of Reality and the Consolidation of Human Values*, by a group of researchers, published by "Arab Woman's Voice Publications," Tunisia, presented by the head of the Arab Women's Organization, Mrs. Leila Ben Ali[30]

The book mainly exposes violence against women as a negative social phenomenon that has not diminished despite the great progress achieved by humanity, stressing that it is most offensive to the essence of man and most indicative that humanity still has a long way for emancipation. Besides being a global problem, the book considers the additional dimension violence takes in Arab societies, and emphasizes the strategic civilization challenges that this phenomenon haunts the entire international communities. The book presents research papers by 12 different researchers, of whom I include: "Violence Against Women, the Human and Legal Dimension," Professor of Sociology, Habib Al-Darwish; "Violence in Family Relations, from Gender Approach," the Palestinian researcher in women's development issues, Sana Muhanna, "Palestinian Women and Violence". This book added a tremendous value to this study, both for the theoretical framework and for the understanding of the deep roots of discrimination.

- The article of Vivian C. Fox, Nov. 2002, "Historical Perspectives on Violence Against Women," *Journal of International Women's Studies*[7].

This article argues the history of state societies where women have been made inferior to men. To achieve and preserve the subservience of the female, ideologies have been raised whereby proposals to patriarchy appear like things, and where violence against women in all its forms has and still thrives in all environments. Although some changes began to alter the thousands of years of inferiority, yet the liberal paradigm could not overcome male dominance. Male control continued via a new ideology the biology of difference, beginning in the 18th and 19th centuries, human rights advocates who believed with Plato, Condorcet, and others, that women shared with men those sentient and moral capacities which recommended rejection of prohibitions placed on women as citizens and as mature human beings. This study considers the historic influence on gender, and sees how power and male domination controlled the status of women for decades, thus helped the researcher to develop a good understanding of the chronological change.

- The book, *Women in an Insecure World: Violence Against Women, Facts, Figures, and Analysis*, by Vlachová, Marie, and Lea Bignon[30]

This book is the first product of the activities of the security sector reform working group, with their goal being to highlight the extent of gender-based violence, its multi-faceted nature, and the seriousness of its consequences on families, groups, and society at large. It covers, among other things: Violence against women's roots, human rights violations, scope against women in daily life, impact in armed and post-conflict situations, and state and security sector's role. It also looks into the response, peace-building, and actions of women to stop violence against women.[31]. The authors steer away from propaganda or moral trends, regardless of the difficulty of avoidance from feelings of pity, horror, or anger at times. Instead, they offer useful information on the subject, with in-depth research of this phenomenon, with analyses of the various causes and historical, social and cultural roots. The text emphasizes that women and men who fight violence are not weak, especially after the abuse of women and girls which caught the attention of various organizations around the world mainly led by women. The book shows women's ability to withstand and play active roles as evidence of their resilience in the face of adversity and their competence when given the opportunity. This book is a guide, a volume that includes descriptive, analytical, and pictorial elements, addressed to all those who address the problems of vulnerable groups, and it is also intended for academics, specialists, and other researchers in issues of violence against women in all their diversity and complexity

- The report: 2020 ESCWA, Social and Economic Situation of Palestinian Women and Girls July 2018 - June 2020

The report analyzes the severe impact of COVID-19 on women, as the pandemic has exacerbated inequality and violence and negatively affected survivors' access to services. It includes an assessment of the Palestinian government's progress in harmonizing national legislation and policies with CEDAW and the Sustainable Development Plans. Despite some positive steps, reform should be improved in legislative action to protect and support women and girls. More efforts must be made to improve women's representation in political affairs, and there should be an increase in the number of women in political and decision-making positions. This report mainly covers the socio-economic circumstances for women in Palestine, yet it notes general strategies and occupation policies and does take into account the needs of Palestinian women and girls in the timeframe of the report 2018-2000. During the same time of the report, there was an increase in activities of settlements and threats of forced evictions and demolitions of homes in East Jerusalem and Area C West Bank.

"The report reviews the situation of Palestinian women and girls, focusing on political, social, economic, and human rights developments. Building on research by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on the status of Palestinian women and girls, and drawing upon the most recent data, the present report highlights the complex situation of women and girls, revealing both progress and setbacks in the context of the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the blockade on Gaza"[32].

Conclusion and Way Forward

The literature reveals a critical need for justice—beyond mere equality—for Palestinian women, reflecting the cultural reality where victims are often blamed, and violence is tolerated. This pattern was starkly evident during the pandemic.

Cultural and educational systems continue to uphold values that fail to condemn male violence sufficiently, stemming from outdated curricula and societal beliefs. Although younger generations are more receptive to equality values, these messages are not effectively integrated into education or social consciousness.

The Palestinian government's reactive approach to crises, characterized by significant gaps between planning and implementation, risks legitimizing violence rather than preventing it. Structural reforms and successful models prioritizing women's rights in practice—not just rhetoric—are urgently needed.

Women's exclusion from decision-making, especially in emergency planning during the lockdown, has undermined their chances for a sustainable, just culture. The delayed approval of the Family Protection Law—awaiting legislation for 18 years—represents a major obstacle to meeting Palestinian women's fundamental human rights.

There remains misunderstanding and resistance regarding CEDAW's application. Contrary to popular belief, CEDAW is not legislation but a flexible agreement that can be adapted culturally without violating social structures. Misconceptions hinder its full and appropriate implementation.

Finally, the patriarchal culture deeply embedded in Palestinian society perpetuates male dominance, skewing power dynamics and sustaining human rights violations, violence, and femicide. Overcoming this requires concerted cultural, legal, and institutional changes to ensure justice and equality for women.

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