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# Women's Rights In Palestine

A presentation by the Palestinian team of PFK  
Students

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# Overview

- Palestinian Women in Numbers
- Violence Statistics
- Civic and Legal Status
- Economic Rights
- Education Rights
- Political Participation
- Obstacles for Change

# Palestinian Women in Numbers

Half of the Palestinian society is female



- 103 males for every 100 females
- Female-headed households 10.6%
- Early marriage for females was 20.5%

The Palestinian society is a young one



- Under 15 years 38.9%
- 15-29 years 29.7%
- 65 and over 2.9%

Women continue to progress in literacy



- Literacy rate: 95.6% for female to 98.6% for male

# Cont.

## Gap in the participation rate in the labor force and wage rate among women and men



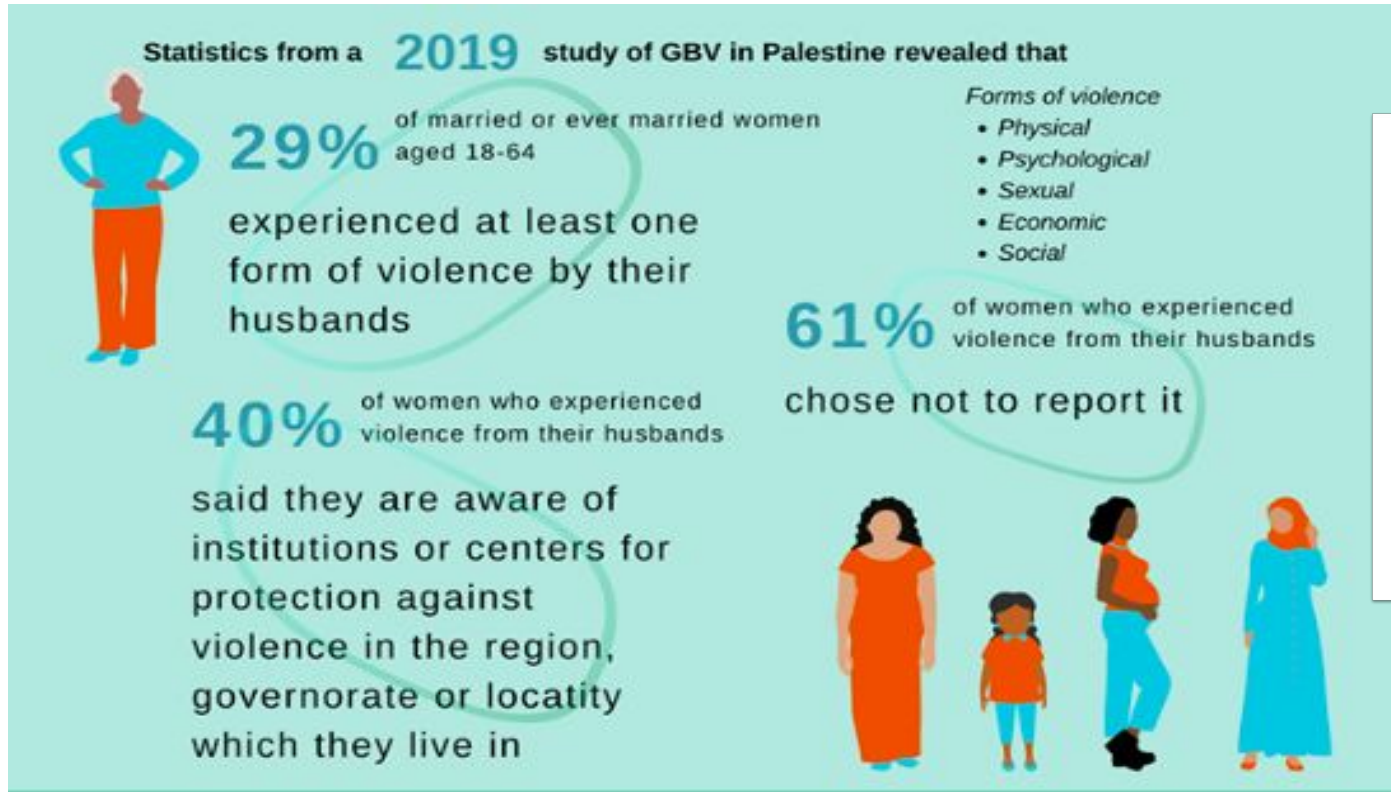
- Participation in the labor force: Female 19.0% - male 71.2%
- Average daily wage, in shekels: Female 84.6 - male 119.6
- Unemployment rate: Female 47.4% - male 22.3%

## Participation in public life and in decision-making positions



- Members of local councils: Female 21.2% - male 78.8%
- Judges: Female 17.3% - male 82.7%
- Civil sector general managers: Female 11.3% - male 88.7%

# Domestic Violence statistics



**Moreover**

**Domestic violence is not prohibited by a specific clause in the law.**

Data on sexual violence, rape and honour crimes are often inaccurate and hard to obtain.

# Civic and Legal Status

Palestinian law is not unified; it is a mixture of Ottoman, British Mandate, Jordanian, Egyptian and Israeli military law.

The PA institutions have been largely dysfunctional, due to internal corruption and favouritism, but also due to Israeli restrictions on their execution of the law through mobility restrictions and lack of jurisdictional power (in Area C, and in other areas due to the application of Israeli military law). Legal provisions in Palestine thus are fragmented, and enforcement is impeded.







# CEDAW in Palestine

Palestine ratified in 2014 the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which is a key normative framework for women's rights and gender equality. However, the incorporation of national laws in line with CEDAW has not occurred.

Laws, such as the Penal Code and Criminal Law, continue to hold valid articles that contradict the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Thus, despite passage of symbolic policies and normative frameworks, the essential laws that would improve the status of women in Palestine remain unpassable.

**One of the major priorities for women activists in Palestine today is the amendment of the gender-discriminatory Personal Status Law (PSL), which are based on the *shari'a*.**

PSL regulate rights in marriage, divorce and inheritance issues.

PSL cases are handled by *shari'a* courts, but family disputes have also increasingly been dealt with by tribal and customary laws which, just as PSL, discriminate against women.





# Economic Rights

Palestinian women face no legal barriers to enter the labour market as entrepreneurs or employees. But the new Palestinian Labour Law of 2000, does not guarantee equal rights for women in the workplace. For example, the law does not include domestic, agricultural, and informal labour, i.e. the main sectors of female labour





Between 1998 and 2009 female labour force participation was constantly below 16.6%, making it one of the lowest rates in the Middle East, and the world (WB, 2011)

One factor causing this low female labour force participation might be cultural perceptions which expect men to act as breadwinners for the house. Such perceptions, however, are changing.

Another obstacle is the lack of adequate services to help women balance work with their reproductive roles. Very few employers provide child-care services and although women are granted a maternity leave of 10 weeks by law, most businesses do not adhere to it and in practise avoid employing married women.



# Property Rights

Palestinian women have the legal right to own land and property. However, only few do so: women are often expected by society to give their share of inheritance to their brothers, and men tend to keep property in their names rather than jointly registering it with their wives.

The actual percentage of women formally owning property thus is low. According to the *shari'a* (religious law), which regulates inheritance issues, a woman has the right to half the share of a man. Many Palestinian women - especially in rural areas - do, however, not make use of this right.

Recently there have been increased campaigns by women's institutions encouraging women to claim their share of inheritance



# Political Participation

While informal political participation in the different political parties (particularly the left) continues to be significant, women's involvement in party executive committees and party councils remains much lower than men's.

In the 2009 party elections, for example, no woman was elected to Fatah's Central Council, and only 11 women were elected to its 120-member Revolutionary Council.

For the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, political parties must have at least one woman among the first 3 on their list, at least 1 woman among the next 4, and 1 woman among every five for the rest of the list. This guarantees about 20 percent women among the candidates. In the local council elections women are guaranteed at least 2 seats in every one of the 26 local councils.





# Education Rights

Girls are catching up in education and literacy rates are improving for women

Women are also advancing in higher education: while in 1996 for every 100 male students there were 77 female students registered in tertiary education, women's enrolment in 2001 rose to 90 female students per 100 male students.

These increases in women's enrolment rates may reflect a change in the social awareness of the value of education for women, but it must also be taken into account that many younger men are imprisoned, or are forced to drop education in order to act as family providers.





# Obstacles for Change

**The lack of political will** among decision and policy-makers to change the status quo is among one of the main obstacles for reform.

The lack of political will is best demonstrated in the national annual budget allocation to the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) which remains insignificant. The lack of political will is also reflected in the lack of implementation of decisions adopted by the Council of Ministers.

**Palestinian social organisation is dominated by classic patriarchy:** the dependent (and thus inferior) status of women is promoted through cultural frameworks, and maintained through patrilineal tracing of decent and inheritance, and men's authority in decision-making and control over family finances.



# Resources

1. UNESCO, *Bridging the Gender Gap: Mapping and Analysis of Gender Policies in Palestine (2011-2017)*, 2019
2. Richter-Devroe, Sophie. "Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Palestinian Territories." *Directorate General for Internal Policies Policy Department C* (2011).
3. WCLAC (Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling), infographic, 2020