





للإرشاد القانوني والإجتماعي

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

مركز المرأة
للإرشاد القانوني والإجتماعي

WCLAC Annual Report

2015

“We don’t have the luxury of despair... in times of crisis we must provide hope and leadership whilst inspiring the next generation of young women.”

Maha Abu-Dayyeh

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EUPOL	European Police
ECOSO	Economic and Social Council (UN)
C	Gender-based violence
GBV	Human rights/International humanitarian law
HR/IHL	Independent Commission for Human Rights
ICHR	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoFA	Ministry of Health
MoH	Ministry of Justice
MoJ	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoSA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MoWA	Memorandum of Understanding
MOU	Occupied Palestinian Territories
OPT	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLC	Palestinian NGO Network
PNGO	Public Prosecution Office
PPO	Union of Palestinian Women's Committees
UPWC	Violence against Women

Glossary of terms

<i>nafaka</i>	In Islamic Sharia, a legal obligation of material support to be provided by the husband for the wife and children. In the event of divorce, the former husband must continue to support his wife for three months and his children until the time when the child can support her/himself or gets married. Similar to: <i>alimony</i>
<i>mahr</i>	In Islamic Sharia, a legal obligation on the part of the man to give the woman an agreed upon sum of money upon registration of the marriage. In the case of divorce, the man is expected to pay either all, half or none of the sum to the wife, depending on the circumstances of divorce. Similar to: <i>dowry</i>

Part I

Report Summary

General Information

Name of NGO: Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)

Reporting period: 1 January 2015 – 31 December 2015

Date of last report: 30 June 2015

Date of this report: 13 February 2016

Political Brief

Overview

The year 2015 has been marked by important political developments for Palestine on the national and international stage. Internal political divisions within Palestine, with the resignation on 17 June of the Fatah-Hamas unity government are sure to presage a period of political uncertainty, which may have negative impacts on women's calls for rights. More than 18 months on from "Operation Protective Edge" in the besieged Gaza strip, which took the lives of 2,251 Palestinians, including 299 women¹, 700-800 Palestinian women "war widows" have become heads of their households in Gaza². This added burden of responsibilities has led many women to feel overwhelmed, stressed or depressed. For Palestinian refugees in and fleeing Syria, life for women continues to become increasingly unbearable with a high rate of rape, incest and child marriage.

Palestinians have faced continued setbacks in 2015 as house demolitions, land confiscation and settlement expansion have continued. This year, 427 Palestinian owned structures have been demolished in the West Bank plus 73 in East Jerusalem³. In an alarming legal development, Israel can now legally seize Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem after Israel's Supreme Court ruled that the holy city is no longer exempt from the Absentees' Property Law⁴. Particularly vulnerable to forced relocations are the Bedouin community, over 7,000 of whom Israel plans to relocate in central West Bank⁵. Additionally, the Israeli Ministry of Housing is currently preparing new plans for 55,548 new residential units in settlements, 21% of these residential units will be located at Maale Adumim settlement and E1,

¹ Figures as of OCHA data on June, 2015

² <http://www.maannews.net/Content.aspx?id=779378>

³ <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc15december-28december-2015.aspx>

⁴ Dearden L, 2015 "Israel can now legally seize Palestinian homes in Jerusalem under 'absentees' property law" The Independent, 17 April 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-can-now-legally-seize-palestinian-homes-in-jerusalem-under-absentees-property-law-10184483.html>,

⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Monthly Report April 2015

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_05_29_english.pdf

46% of them East of the Apartheid wall and 33% West of the wall⁶. 2015 has also witnessed a crackdown on Palestinian female political activists by the Israeli authorities. Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Khalida Jarrar was arrested on April 2 and subsequently detained pursuant to an administrative detention order issued by an Israeli military commander in the West Bank on Sunday April 5⁷. At the end of November 2015, 527 Palestinians were held in Administrative detention in Israel including one woman and 5 minors -more than double the 181 held at the same time last year⁸.

There are efforts in place to secure greater accountability for the legal rights for women. In March 2015 the National Coalition for Implementing UNSCR 1325, which is a resolution aimed at the security and protection of women across the world, met to discuss its strategic advocacy plan for implementing the resolution. On the international stage there has been some progress made towards recognising the impacts of the Israeli occupation on women, and on opening legal proceedings against Israel. On 20 March 2015 the UN Commission on the Status of Women approved a resolution blaming Israel's on-going occupation of Palestinian territory for "the grave situation of Palestinian women."⁹ The resolution called on the international community to continue providing urgently needed assistance and services "to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families".

In an effort to seek accountability for crimes committed and to push for an end to the Israeli Occupation, on 1 January 2015 Palestine began the process of opening an investigation into "alleged crimes committed in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since June 13, 2014"¹⁰. Since then, the PNA has acceded to the Rome Statute and on 1 April 2015 Palestine became a State Party to the ICC, providing an additional mechanism for the pursuit of gender justice in Palestine.

In the second half of 2015 in mid-September, heightened tension began in the Old City of Jerusalem and increased significantly from 1 October throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel. Demonstrations and confrontations with the Israeli forces have taken place all over the country and deliberately there has been an excessive use of force against Palestinians by the Israeli military and police including extra-judicial killings¹¹. From 1 October till 31 December 117 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces and around 13000 injured¹².

For well over a year prior to the recent upsurge in violence the UN, EU and civil society have been warning that tensions were on the rise in Jerusalem. The general consensus is that the tension can be attributable to a number of factors including:

- Restrictions on access to the Al Aqsa mosque;
- Israeli Police/military brutality and night raids;
- Relentless settlement construction in the City and the West Bank;

⁶ Peace Now; Distancing the Two State Solution: The Ministry of Housing's Plans and Construction –Exposed, Settlement Watch, Peace Now, December 2015. <http://peacenow.org.il/eng/sites/default/files/MOH-report-Nov-2015.pdf>

⁷ UNOCHA, Press briefing note on Israel <http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/UN%20OCHR%20on%20Admin%20detention.pdf>,

⁸ Btselem, Statistics on Administrative Detention, published 3 January 2016
http://www.btselem.org/administrative_detention/statistics

⁹ WCLAC, Commission on Status of Women blames Israel for the grave situation of Palestinian women, 23 March 2015
<http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1472>

¹⁰ International Criminal Court, Palestine http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/structure%20of%20the%20court/office%20of%20the%20prosecutor/comm%20and%20ref/pe-ongoing/palestine/Pages/palestine.aspx,

¹¹ OHCHR, Statement by the High Commissioner at the Special Meeting of the Human Rights Council on the occasion of the visit of the President of the State of Palestine: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16665&LangID=E#sthash.ZSDpF1Pg.dpuf>

¹² OCHA, special Document: CASUALTIES IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY (OPT) AND ISRAEL 1 Oct - 30 Nov 2015 http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/wb_casualties_14_12_2015.pdf

- Lack of adequate housing and building permits for Palestinians; and
- Freedom of movement restrictions imposed by the Israeli permit system.

In addition to these factors the failure of any credible political process to resolve the conflict in accordance with well-established principles of international law inevitably leads to erosion in faith in a peaceful resolution¹³.

During this same period WCLAC has observed what appears to be a dramatic increase in violent night raids conducted by the Israeli military on Palestinian homes and a corresponding increase in the level of threatening behavior, including threats to shoot family members, including women, if they spoke. Some recent examples of raids that occurred on just one night in October include the following¹⁴:

On 20 October 2015, Sahar R. reports that around 80 Israeli soldiers surrounded her home in the town of Beit Furik at 4:30 a.m. and blew open her front door before it could be opened. She reports that the soldiers then made her 10-year-old son, Ibrahim, stand facing a wall with arms and one leg raised for two hours. He was so terrified by the experience that Sahar found Ibrahim in this position even after the soldiers had departed. She also reports that a soldier threatened to shoot her when she asked to say goodbye to her other son who was taken away by the military.

On 20 October 2015, Tamam K. reports that around 20 Israeli soldiers broke down the front door of her home in the town of Beit Furik at 3:30 a.m. She reports that the soldiers immediately went to the bedroom of her 22-year-old son and poured water over him and prodded him with their rifles to wake him up. When Tamam tried to intervene the soldiers threatened to kill her son unless she was quiet. Tamam reports that her 3-year-old son then woke up and was terrified to see soldiers inside their home.

Human Security: Framework for Analysis

Human security provides the frame for WCLAC's work. This accounts for both political realities that affect all Palestinian people, such as the Israeli occupation and internal dynamics, like perceived religion and culture, which specifically marginalise and oppress women and girls. Human security encompasses psychological, social, economic, and political aspects of the life of individuals, communities, and nations. It refers to the right to be free, or be protected, from harms that threaten the overall wellbeing and dignity of human beings and the sustainability of the environment. These harms include violence of all forms; lack of basic survival needs and education, absence of a sustainable livelihood, denial of the right to life and other inalienable rights such as dignity and freedom.¹⁵

Palestinians' human security is perpetually and increasingly threatened in the OPT where Israeli military law and policies of occupation continue undeterred. According to UNOCHA, as of 30 December 2015 the number of Palestinian fatalities at the hands of Israeli forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip stood at 158 during the year 2015, while the number of Palestinians injured by Israeli forces stands at 13,589¹⁶. Soldier and settler related violence remains an on-going threat to the livelihood of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank including Area C and East Jerusalem. Throughout the year 2015, 135 Israeli settler attacks on Palestinian properties were recorded and 89 cases of settler violence that resulted in injuries of Palestinian civilians¹⁷.

¹³ WCLAC, Escalating violence- update, 27 October 2015 <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1600>

¹⁴ WCLAC, Evidence of extra-judicial killings and death threats against women, 09 November 2015 <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1630>

¹⁵ As denoted in the ground-breaking UNDP report on human security, 'UNDP Human Development Report', published in 1994.

¹⁶ UNOCHA OPT weekly highlights, protection of civilians, 30 December 2015 <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc15december-28december-2015.aspx>

¹⁷ OCHA opt weekly highlights, protection of Civilians, 14 December 2015 <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc14december-14december-2015.aspx>

Palestinians are also rendered insecure due to their lack of adequate housing facilities. According to OCHA oPt approximately 18,000 housing units remain uninhabitable in Gaza as a result of Israeli shelling last summer, leaving 108,000 Palestinians homeless . 100,000 Palestinians are still internally displaced and face a range of protection threats alongside their need for assistance, particularly female-headed households which include 22,474 women and children. Around 10,000 IDPs are being housed in Collective Centers across the strip, where women suffer a lack of privacy and only have access to communal bathrooms. There is also a very bad situation for women from families living in make-shift shelters in the rubble of their homes where access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, required especially by women and girls during menstruation, is severely impeded. It is estimated that approximately 120,000 people across the Gaza Strip remain without a municipal water supply due to unrepaired damage¹⁸. On a positive note in Gaza, female mediators are often asked to intervene to solve problems within a family, such as settling disputes between married couples, but these mediators still lack official and government support.

Food security

As a consequence of the nine-year siege and Israel's Dahiya doctrine - a military strategy involving the deliberate targeting of key infrastructure - Gaza's economy has all but come to a halt. With high unemployment, low wages and rising food prices, especially following the destruction of tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, which provided a vital lifeline through the smuggling of food and farming instruments across the border, more than half of the households in Gaza have become either food insecure (44%) or vulnerable to food insecurity (16%) even when taking into account food distributions to almost 1.1 million people by the UN¹⁹. Moreover, today almost 90% of the coastal aquifer water in Gaza is not safe for drinking without treatment²⁰, agricultural sites devastated by military action and fishermen regularly fired at by Israeli naval ships in violation of the ceasefire²¹, and even subsistence farming is untenable. Due to traditional practices and entrenched gender discrimination, women and girls suffer disproportionately under circumstances of food insecurity. They are usually the last to eat and always receive smaller portions than men and boys.

Moreover, situations where families are forced to pay tens of thousands of Shekels in fines to postpone the demolition of their homes in Area C and East Jerusalem before ultimately hiring a bulldozer to demolish the structures themselves (because it's cheaper), push families into depletive coping strategies such as cutting meat out of the family diet. Yet, whilst this may give temporary relief to the family in the short run, such coping mechanisms deplete the family assets in the long-term²².

Home Demolitions, Arrest raids, forced relocation and settlement expansions

To date this year, 427 Palestinian owned structures have been demolished in the West Bank plus 74 in East Jerusalem, resulting in a weekly average of 20 structure demolition and 25 Palestinians displaced every week in 2015²³. House demolitions have a devastating effect on Palestinian women, pushing them and their families into abject poverty and exposing family members to significant psychological and

¹⁸ OCHA opt, 2015 Humanitarian Needs overview, November 2014

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/HNO_indesign_21November2014_draft2.pdf

¹⁹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Relief and Works Agency and World Food Programme, 2012, page 20.

²⁰ UNRWA, a report by the United Nations Country Team in the occupied Palestinian territory "Gaza in 2020, a liveable place?" August 2012.

<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/file/publications/gaza/Gaza%20in%202020.pdf>

²¹ Press TV, Israeli navy fires shells at Palestinian fishing boats off Gaza, 6 November 2015

<http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2016/01/06/444706/Israel-Palestine-Gaza-fishing-boats/>

²² Eguiguren & Saadeh 2014, Protection in the occupied Palestinian territories: "They can do projects here for 1,000 years and nothing will change" http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/oPt_full_study_final.pdf,

²³ OCHA weekly highlight, Protection of Civilians, 28 December 2015. <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc15december-28december-2015.aspx>

physical harm. Traditionally, women bear the primary responsibility for the physical and emotional care of children, elders, and others who need it. Faizeh D., 40 years old, told WCLAC the story of her house demolition in the Jordan Valley without prior notice. Her husband and herself were working in the field when they received a phone call from relatives saying that their house is being demolished. When they arrived to their house they found their house already destroyed with all their furniture and belongings inside. Faizeh along with all other neighbors whose houses were destroyed, were given tents by the Red Crescent but the tents are now under the threat of being removed by the Israeli military²⁴.

Similarly, Fadwa M. from Sur Bahir in East Jerusalem tells the story of her house demolition, she narrates “My situation is hard. My husband is addicted to drugs. My eldest son dropped out of school so that he could work and help support the family.” After Fadwa's son saved money and took a loan to build a house next to hers so he can help raise his brothers, the house was demolished on claims of illegality as no permit was obtained²⁵. In both of the cases the women expressed frustration, fear, lack of basic general and gender-related facilities and concern for their children and family well-being. The fact that their houses were demolished burdens them more than other family members as they take the responsibility of their family's well-being.

House demolitions are also used by the Israeli government as a punitive action towards families of killed Palestinian suspects. During 2015, Israeli government continued and increased punitive home demolitions– the demolitions of the family homes of Palestinians allegedly responsible for attacks on Israel, a practice sanctioned by Israel’s Supreme Court – as an extension of collective punishment. On the 6th of October Israeli forces sealed a home in Abu Tor and destroyed two homes in Jabal AlMukkaber. On the 9th of December, Israeli forces demolished a home in Hebron that belongs to a teenager killed by Israeli soldiers, and the list of punitive home demolitions goes on and on²⁶. However, these demolitions and sealing of family homes are prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention as they are unjustified collective punishment, and they cause harm and displacement for families.

In 2015 there were further developments in Israel’s plan to “relocate” around 7,000 Palestinian Bedouin, around 70 per cent of whom are refugees, currently residing in 46 sites in the central West Bank, and another 170 in the village of Susiya in southern Hebron²⁷. The residents strongly oppose these plans and have requested protection and assistance in their current location²⁸. A similar legal battle is underway to determine the fate of the Palestinian village of Susiya in southern Hebron in Area C. The residents of Susiya requested that the Israeli High Court issue an interim injunction freezing demolitions pending a ruling on the residents’ main petition to consider alternative planning in the area. The judge rejected this request without a hearing. This decision paves the way for the ICA to execute the demolition orders pending against virtually all of the existing structures in the community. This development raises concerns about the forcible transfer of Susiya’s 350 residents²⁹. As women’s lives are more likely to revolve around the home they tend to be disproportionately affected by these forced evictions and home demolitions, and the trauma of these incidents is frequently detrimental both to women’s mental health and that of the children they normally care for³⁰. A new illegal settlement was

²⁴ WCLAC, women's voices, 11 March 2015 <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1545>

²⁵ WCLAC, women's voices, 13 January 2015 <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1469>

²⁶ AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT, Israel/OPT: No justification for deliberate attacks on civilians, unlawful killings by Israeli forces, or collective punishment of Palestinians, 9 October 2015 <file:///C:/Users/reem.WCLAC/Downloads/MDE1526332015ENGLISH.pdf>

²⁷ OCHA Factsheet: Bedouin Communities at Risk of Forcible Transfer, September 2014.

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_communities_jerusalem_factsheet_september_2014_english.pdf

²⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Monthly Report April 2015

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_05_29_english.pdf,

²⁹ BBC News, Susiya: Palestinian West Bank village faces bleak end, 25 July 2015 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33651356>

³⁰ Hannah Rought-Brooks, Salwa Duaibis, Soraida Hussein, ‘Palestinian Women: Caught in the Cross-Fire Between Occupation and Patriarchy’ (2010) *Feminist Formations*. 22(3) 139

established consisting of movable houses and water tanks by fencing off an area in the Jabal Subeih zone skirting the village of Beita. This seems to be a new veiled method of appropriation of Palestinian land³¹. The Israeli government announced plans to build 900 settler homes in the Ramat Shlomo settlement neighbourhood of annexed East Jerusalem³². The plans were criticized by the European Union and the US and Palestine. The approval for the constructions came hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formed a new right-wing-religious coalition government.

By the end of 2015, 527 Palestinians were placed under administrative detention by the Israeli authorities, including 5 minors and 1 woman³³. Arrest raids can have repercussions on Palestinian families, both through physical violence and emotional trauma. A rubber-coated bullet injured a Palestinian woman, and a youth was reportedly beaten up and then arrested during a dawn operation, when Israeli forces raised the al-Thahra neighborhood in al-Isawiya, East Jerusalem, and deployed to enable bulldozers to raze to the ground a house under construction belonging to Isama Ribhi dari, for which he lacked an Israeli permit³⁴.

There is also the growing phenomenon of “car crashes” that specifically impact Palestinian civilians living in close proximity to illegal settlements. A 10-year-old Palestinian girl, Mariam Karim Dana, suffered multiple fractures after a settler guard jeep hit her in East Jerusalem late February³⁵. The driver was not detained, which is in stark contrast to Israel’s treatment of Palestinians who are typically shot on site when involved in car crashes. Young children are often affected by such violent acts: Raya Hazim Sawalha, a 12-year-old girl, was injured when rocks thrown near the settlement of Beit El by settlers who target cars bearing Palestinian number plates struck the car she was travelling in³⁶. Impact on children in turn has a hugely detrimental psychological impact on family life, and a particularly disproportionate effect on women. In the aftermath of tragedy mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and grandmothers are forced to manage and come to terms with grave losses of human life and injury, and mothers feel they are unable to protect family members, especially their children.

Female Prisoners and Political Arrests

Over the past year WCLAC has noted a worrying spike in the number of arrests and detainments of female political activists and lawyers. Khalida Jarrar, a political leader of the left-wing Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, was placed under a six-month administrative detention by Israeli troops on 4 April on the charge that she was involved in the Palestinian Authority’s relationship with the International Criminal Court (ICC)³⁷ and on the 6th of December 2015 she was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment³⁸. On 17 July, the Israeli Central Court in Beersheba sentenced an elderly Palestinian woman, Fathiyya Khanfar, 60 years old, to eleven months in prison despite her poor health. She was accused of trying to smuggle a mobile phone to her imprisoned son in 2013³⁹. In mid-January Malak al-

³¹ <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=759213>

³² MEE 2015 EU joins criticism of East Jerusalem settlement plan, 9 May 2015 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/eu-joins-criticism-east-jerusalem-settlement-plan-169486736>,

³³ Btselem, Statistics on Administrative Detention, published 3 January 2016 http://www.btselem.org/administrative_detention/statistics

³⁴ Ma’an News Agency, Israeli forces demolish house in al-Isawiya in East Jerusalem, January 20 2015, <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=755156>

³⁵ Ma’an News Agency, “Palestinian girl injured after being hit by settler vehicle in Silwan”, 27 February 2015 <http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=759601>

³⁶ Ma’an News Agency, 12-year-old injured after settlers hurl rocks at Palestinian car, 11 January 2015, <http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=752974>

³⁷ UNOCHA, Israel briefing notes <http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/UN%20OHCHR%20on%20Admin%20detention.pdf>

³⁸ Maan News, Israel sentences Palestinian MP Khalida Jarrar to 15 months in jail, 07 December 2015 <https://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=769210>

³⁹ IMEMC News, “Elderly Palestinian Woman Sentenced to Eleven Months in Prison”, 17 June 2015, <http://www.imemc.org/article/71967>

Khatib, aged 14 became the youngest Palestinian girl to be jailed in an Israeli prison for throwing stones and being in an acclaimed possession of a knife⁴⁰. She was detained for six weeks. As of December 2015, there are reportedly 6800 political prisoners in Israeli prisons including 60 female prisoners, 470 child prisoners and 660 administrative detainees⁴¹. Women are also often subjected to physical abuse during detention. Lina Khattab, an 18-year-old media student, who was arrested in December 2014 after being accused of throwing stones at a military vehicle during a protest, had her arms twisted and was violently pulled and dragged into a military jeep⁴². She spent seven months in Israeli detention.

Political Security

On 16 June 2015 the Palestinian unity government led by Prime Minister Rami Al-Hamdallah announced that it would tender its resignation. It was reported that the decision was a result of Hamas and Fatah's failure to cooperate on the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip after the destruction wrought by "Operation Protective Edge" in summer 2014, overhaul Palestinian political institutions or set up elections pledged by the end of this year⁴³. The Fatah-Hamas reconciliation government had been formed in June 2014 after the two parties agreed to implement a unity pact as part of the Fatah-Hamas Gaza Agreement signed on 23 April 2014, the first time such an agreement had been made in seven years.

The number of women in the Palestinian Cabinet is dropping in an alarming point. Within this past year it has dropped from 6 women minister to only 3. This raises questions about the political security of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Regarding the on-going Israeli occupation, indirect talks between Hamas and Israel were confirmed by Hamas leaders but denied by the Israeli Prime Minister⁴⁴. While there is unlikely to be any immediate results of these possible talks, they indicate a positive small diplomatic step for the future. More positive steps have been taken on the international stage in this regard. In an effort to seek accountability for crimes committed and to push for an end to the Israeli Occupation, on 1 January 2015 Palestine began the process of opening an investigation into "alleged crimes committed in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since June 13, 2014" and the Prosecutor opened a preliminary examination of the situation in Palestine⁴⁵. Since then, the PNA has acceded to the Rome Statute and on 1 April 2015 Palestine became a State Party to the ICC, providing an additional mechanism for the pursuit of gender justice in Palestine. On 25 June 2015 Palestine submitted documents to the ICC detailing Palestinian complaints against Israel for alleged breaches of international law, including serious war crimes⁴⁶. The submission followed the release of a UN human rights council report on 22 June 2015 which accused Israeli and Palestinian factions of multiple potential violations of international law including suspected war crimes⁴⁷. Additional steps in pursuit of accountability was taken by four human

⁴⁰ Levy and Levac, "Jailed at 14: The youngest Palestinian girl in Israeli prison", Haaretz 14 February 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/twilight-zone/.premium-1.642193>

⁴¹ Addameer, December statistics: <http://www.addameer.org/statistics>

⁴² Addameer, "Violations continue against Palestinian Women and Girls on International Women's Day" <http://www.addameer.org/etemplate.php?id=747>

⁴³ Haaretz, Palestinian unity government to dissolve itself in coming days, Abbas says, June 16 2015 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.661522>,

⁴⁴ Ha'aretz, "Khaled Meshal: Hamas Talks With Israel Look 'Very Positive'", 21 August 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.672296>

⁴⁵ International Criminal Court, Palestine http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/structure%20of%20the%20court/office%20of%20the%20prosecutor/comm%20and%20ref/pe-ongoing/palestine/Pages/palestine.aspx

⁴⁶ Beaumont, "Palestine prepares to submit file that could see Israeli officials indicted", The Guardian, 24 June 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/24/palestine-prepares-tsubmit-file-israeli-officials-indicted-international-criminal-court>

⁴⁷ Beaumont, "UN accuses Israel and Hamas of possible war crimes during 2014 Gaza conflict", The Guardian, 22 June 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/22/un-accuses-israel-and-hamas-of-possible-war-crimes-during-2014-gaza-war>

rights organizations as they delivered a confidential communication to Madam Prosecutor Bensouda of the International Criminal Court on behalf of themselves and Palestinian victims of Israel's "Operation Protective Edge". The documentation which was prepared by Al-Haq, Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, Aldameer and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights contains evidence that convicts Israel of committing war crimes in Gaza in 2014⁴⁸.

One positive political development concerning Palestinian women was the Palestinian Legislative Council approving a national framework to implement UNSCR 1325 in Palestine⁴⁹, although nothing has officially been declared following the approval. The discussions called for broader participation by women in resolving conflicts, in national negotiating committees and in the public freedoms and social reconciliation committees. Another positive development in Palestinian confrontation against the Israeli administrative detention policy was the release of Khader Adnan after 55 days on hunger strike. Adnan, who Israel officially released in July 2015, has become a potent symbol of resistance to Israel's occupation. He had been incarcerated indefinitely without formal charges, and started fasting on 6 May. The confrontation underscored the power of hunger strikes among imprisoned Palestinians, who use them to protest their conditions and incarceration⁵⁰. This method has been also used by other administratively detained prisoners and the most recent prisoner on a hunger strike is Mohammad AlQiq who is a journalist and was detained on the 21st of November 2015⁵¹.

But in the area of political security, Israel's policies mean that what little progress is made on moving the women's rights agenda in the OPT is swiftly undermined. Women activists who peacefully protest are subjected to heavy handed responses by the Israel security forces. On 7 March over 1,000 Palestinian and Israeli women who gathered at the foot of the separation wall at Qalandiya checkpoint to demonstrate their human rights and demand the end of the Israeli occupation were tear-gassed and pepper sprayed⁵². A lack of cooperation from Israel also led to the cancellation of the intended visit to Occupied Palestinian Territories by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Ms. Rashida Manjoo, who had been intending to visit the region from 19-29 January 2015⁵³. Manal Tamimi, a WCLAC field worker, was shot in the leg by Israeli forces during a peaceful demonstration⁵⁴. These examples highlight that women's rights activists must be vigilant and demand more accountability from our leaders, developing mechanisms that would ensure it. Ensuring political security in Palestine and freedom from political repression, as is Palestinians' right under international law,⁵⁵ as well as normalizing and institutionalising gender equality and women's rights, is perpetually compromised by the prolonged Israeli occupation.

⁴⁸ Alhaq Organization, Palestinian Human Rights Organisations Deliver Submission to the International Criminal Court on Alleged Israeli War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity during 2014 Gaza offensive, 23 November 2015 <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/targets/international-criminal-court-icc/998-palestinian-human-rights-organisations-deliver-submission-to-the-international-criminal-court-on-alleged-israeli-war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-during-2014-gaza-offensive>

⁴⁹ MIFTAH, "National Coalition for Implementing UNSCR 1325", 5 March 2015 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.661522>

⁵⁰ Hadid, "Worried That Fasting Palestinian Prisoner Could Die, Israel Releases Him", New York Times, 29 June 2015 http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/30/world/middleeast/worried-that-fasting-palestinian-prisoner-could-die-israel-releases-him.html?_r=0

⁵¹ Addameer organization, prisoner profile, 10 January 2016 <http://www.addameer.org/ar/prisoner/%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82>

⁵² Ma'an News Agency, "Israeli forces respond to Women's Day march with violence", 7 March 2015 <https://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=759782>,

⁵³ WCLAC, "Lack of cooperation from Israel leads to the cancellation of visit by UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to Palestine", <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1444>

⁵⁴ WCLAC, "WCLAC field researcher shot during weekly demonstration", 7 April 2015 <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1490>,

⁵⁵ A people fighting illegal occupation have the legal right to resist that occupation with recourse to "all necessary means at their disposal" according to numerous UN resolutions: (2107 (XX) of 1965; 2270 (XXII) of 1967; 2707 (XXV) of 1970; 3113 (XXVIII) of 1973).

In the last few months of 2015, the physical security of Palestinians has been particularly disregarded. About 132 Palestinians, including children and women have been shot by Israeli soldiers under the claim of alleged attacks on Israeli soldiers or citizens. In September, a Palestinian female teenager, Hadil Hashlamoun (18 years old) was shot 10 times by an Israeli soldier in Hebron and left bleeding for 30 minutes. Footage at the minute of the shooting shows the teenager had no weapon and contradicts the Israeli military story⁵⁶. In October, another Palestinian female teenager (Shurooq Dweiyat) was fatally shot in East Jerusalem without any proof of the alleged stabbing of an Israeli man⁵⁷. These many incidents of shooting Palestinian children, men and women show the systematic targeting of Palestinians based on their identity rather than actions.

Economic Security

A recent economic update by the World Bank identified Gaza's unemployment rate as the highest in the world. With unemployment among the youth at 60%, the World Bank estimates that the Israeli siege of Gaza, in place since 2007, has resulted in a 50 per cent decrease in Gaza's GDP⁵⁸. Whilst this spells further aid dependency for a highly resilient people, economic hardship and a steep increase in women headed households appears to have had a positive effect on women's participation in the labor market where many women have taken to working in the field, picking vine leaves⁵⁹, in the workshop, undertaking joinery, and at sea as fisherwomen, in order to support their families through work previously deemed "men's work" by local media⁶⁰. Women in the West Bank are also pioneering new occupations and this year saw the first woman taxi driver and the first woman heavy vehicle driving instructor open shop in Hebron⁶¹. Also this year Palestine has seen the first legally authorized female marriage registrar, Tahrir Hammad, who was appointed in July 2015 as a marriage registrar in the Ramallah municipality marriage court⁶². In spite of women's new economic activities however, opportunities for employment are few and there is a great need for the provision of protection and legal services to thousands of war widows who lost their spouses during the three most recent offensives over 2008-2014⁶³.

Conclusion

2015 has been marked by a number of small steps taken towards securing legal accountability of the Israeli occupation and human right crimes at an international level, and official international recognition of the impact of the occupation on women's rights in Palestine. But the entrenchment of the occupation and political fragmentation in the OPT have resulted in reversion to the idea among the political leaders and society at large that ensuring women's rights is secondary to national liberation. Women are still poorly represented at the decision making level, and women still remain disproportionate victims of continued Israeli aggression in house demolitions, forced resettlements and food and water insecurity.

Additionally, the last quarter of the year 2015 has shown that the Israeli occupation has a high tendency to violate International Humanitarian Law without any restrictions. This means further lack of safety and

⁵⁶ Russia Today, IDF shoots 18yo Palestinian woman 10 times, lets her die in street, 23 September 2015. <https://www.rt.com/news/316252-idf-kills-palestinian-woman-hebron/>

⁵⁷ Aljazeera News, Palestinian woman 'shot after stabbing Israeli man', 7 October 2015. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/palestinian-woman-shot-stabbing-incident-151007082227215.html>

⁵⁸ World Bank 2015 Gaza Situation Report 94, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Gaza%20Situation%20Report%2094%20-%20UNRWA.pdf>

⁵⁹ <http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2015/05/18/716284.html>

⁶⁰ <http://www.alhadath.ps/article.php?id=1017879y16873593Y1017879>

⁶¹ <http://www.raya.ps/ar/news/904751.html>

⁶² <http://www.fatehwatan.ps/page-124356.html>

⁶³ UNOCHA 2015 Strategic Response Plan OPT http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/srp_2015.pdf

insecurity not only for the Palestinian society as a whole but to the Palestinian women in particular, as members in the political, social sphere and mothers and family members⁶⁴.

Highlights

WCLAC's co-founder and General Director Maha Abu-Dayyeh pass away early 2015

The most significant event, particularly organisationally, was the passing of Maha Abu-Dayyeh on 9 January 2015, a co-founder of WCLAC and beloved General Director since its founding in 1991. Maha was the inspirational leader whose feminist vision of securing and promoting Palestinian women's rights, providing legal and social protection to women, and creating an independent Palestinian state guided by the rule of law has been the point of departure for the thinking and deliberations that went into previous strategic-planning and much of WCLAC's work. Maha's feminism was heavily informed by social, political, and legal theories, lessons learned from participation in Palestinian and international women's movements, and sustained interactions with oppressed and marginalized Palestinian women and with her peers locally, regionally, and internationally. The feminist theoretical orientation and the discourse she developed, therefore, were distinct and ground breaking. Maha's feminism was the heartbeat of WCLAC and shaped both the Palestinian and the global women's movement agendas. In Palestine, Maha's contributions challenged taken-for-granted cultural and social concepts and beliefs about women and their role across multiple spheres of politics and society and helped institutionalise women's activism. In the Arab region Maha was instrumental in creating a space for fruitful dialogue among Arab women and activists through WCLAC's membership in Salma, a network against violence against women in the Arab world, and Aisha, the Arab Women's Forum. Internationally, Maha gained new understandings through engagements with women from around the world at conferences and workshops as both speaker and participant. She always returned to her WCLAC home with ideas to innovate and create in order to advance WCLAC's mission and purpose. *(For a list of media coverage about WCLAC's co-founder passing away please refer to Appendix I)*

Since Maha passed away, WCLAC has been undergoing a transitional period through the appointment of a part time interim director general, who left six months after her appointment. A new full time General Director, Randa Siniora, has recently been appointed and has taken the lead in moving WCLAC from this transitional period towards a more stable situation. The dominating feature of this transitional period is the organizational external evaluation that the whole center is currently going through.

Successful preparation of WCLAC's 2016-2020 strategic plan

In 2015 WCLAC successfully worked on developing the 2016-2020 strategic plan following a rapid assessment of the 2013-2015 strategy with the support of Gender at Work. The strategic plan is designed to respond to the needs of beneficiaries and partners, which they've outlined in multiple internal and external evaluations. It was drawn up using these evaluations and extensive planning sessions to identify the most pressing issues affecting women's rights and the most appropriate means to address these. The strategy reflects a comprehensive appraisal of the exact needs of Palestinian women and combines a multi-pronged strategy to effectively deal with the challenges at local, national and international levels.

The strategy builds on WCLAC's previous successes in the core work of providing legal, social and protection services to women, raising awareness about women's rights, and advocacy and capacity building. Following successful evaluations of the best way to create societal change about women's rights, WCLAC's new strategy places greater emphasis on grassroots work, targeting new local groups to

⁶⁴ WCLAC, Jerusalem: A City on Edge, May 2015 http://www.wclac.org/english/flip/jerusalem_book2015/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#5

be catalysts for change within their community. The new strategy also responds to feedback from clients and partners on the relationship between violence and women's economic independence, suggesting that empowering women is incomplete without economic empowerment, and aims to review laws and refer women to relevant entities that provide economic empowerment. Advocacy work at the national and international levels are an inseparable part of WCLAC's work especially efforts to change policies, laws and legislation to ensure equality, non-discrimination and respect for women's human rights. Finally the strategy realizes that the worst effects of the Israeli occupation are felt by the most marginalized groups in Palestinian society, including women, and it therefore includes the necessity for collecting testimonies and submitting reports to the UN and relevant entities to hold Israel accountable to international conventions. WCLAC is also continuing in its engagement with the UN after the accession of Palestine to international humanitarian and human rights treaties and conventions including CEDAW. Several consultation sessions were carried out with partner organizations during the process of preparing the draft plan, in which WCLAC presented a draft strategy and received feedback on it. The final draft of the strategy was then presented to the Board of Directors and was approved.

Judicial Precedents

The work of the Service Unit at WCLAC comprises multiple aspects but focuses on legal advice, court representation, social support and counseling. Due to the dysfunctional status of the PLC and nonexistence of legal reform, WCLAC strives for legal precedents to contribute to creating better legal environment that can impact lives. In 2015 there were two judicial precedents that WCLAC helped establish:

1) Through a judicial precedent, WCLAC has been able to successfully confirm a legal principle that stipulates the following: legal provisions which Palestinian lawyers get should be endorsed even if more than one judge had looked into the case.

Three years ago a woman approached WCLAC with a case of child custody. WCLAC's lawyer raised a court case for her children custody according to the procedures followed by the centre. But the case was unique as the children had American citizenship which caused lengthy procedures that resulted in having multiple different judges' look into the case. WCLAC's lawyer was eventually able to get a court decision that gives custody to the mother. However, the husband's lawyer filed an appeal based on a former Jordanian judicial precedent that indicates that in case of transfer of a lawsuit from one judge to the other without a delegation letter, the decision taken by the second judge is considered illegal. Thus, based on the Jordanian judicial precedent the court decision that granted the woman custody over her children was annulled. WCLAC's lawyer then took the case to the Palestinian high court and expounded that basing court decisions on a Jordanian precedent affects the stability of the Palestinian court judgments, as Palestinian judges are not many and one case is usually looked into by multiple judges. The lawyer was successful in persuading the judges and the woman gained custody over her children. The court later emphasized everyone's right to get a fair court decision no matter how many judges have looked into the case.

2) A woman approached WCLAC inquiring divorce from her legally incompetent husband, as she only discovered that he has mental disability after marriage. WCLAC's lawyer made a divorce claim on behalf of the woman and after the woman was granted divorce the husband's lawyer appealed the court decision on basis of the voidness of the divorce as defeasance is not possible from a legally incompetent person. The court adopted the husband's lawyer claim and the divorce became illicit. However, WCLAC's lawyer went back to article 8 of the Personal Status Law that concerns marriage from a "crazed" or "unbalanced" person which stipulates that, the judge shall allow the marriage from one that is crazed or unbalanced only if it has been proven through a medical report that this marriage will benefit him/her.

Accordingly, WCLAC's lawyer raised the case to the High Court and explained that this article does not apply in this case as the marriage was completed without a medical proof of the husband's condition and neither the wife nor the court knew of his incompetence before the marriage.

Consequently, the high court decided to annul the marriage contract and grant the woman divorce as the marriage was done without the wife's knowledge of her husband's mental illness. The court decision was then reinforced and this legal precedent was listed. Currently, a number of lawyers are using this judicial precedent and are asking WCLAC for the full copy of the court's decision so they could use it in defense of women who have been misled to marry an incompetent man without their knowledge.

WCLAC extends Takamol to grassroots and a wide range of service providers

WCLAC realizes that offering services to women who are victims of violence or threatened with it is not enough. These services need to accommodate women's needs in terms of location and treatment. In this regard, WCLAC in 2015 worked on extending its outreach and service provision to underserved areas where women are oppressed or disregarded, make the National Referral System (Takamol⁶⁵) a popular tool that enables women to deal with domestic violence through the preparation of a protection manual for grassroots⁶⁶ and on training service providers on how best to deal with women who have suffered from violence and how best to use the National Referral System (Takamol⁶⁷).

Building on its previous experience, WCLAC has aimed to support CBOs to provide social and legal counseling in addition to awareness-raising in their constituencies. Thus WCLAC worked on extending its outreach, through building partnership with Jericho Women Association in order to provide women in Jericho and the Jordan Valley area with Social and Legal Aid. The Jericho Women Association was chosen as the main partner to WCLAC after a long process of reviewing and visiting other women grassroots' organizations in Jericho. Thus making it the 4th partnership that WCLAC has with grassroots' organizations covering the north and the center of the Palestinian Territories. These partnerships enable women in remote areas to access the different services and seek help when needed.

WCLAC lodges Five UN submissions and scores a record number of briefings

During 2015 a record number of testimonies were collected (168 testimonies). The issue of Night raids on Palestinian homes located in close proximity to settlements featured in the testimonies collected as it was the issue which Palestinian women said affected them most. These testimonies provided a platform for Palestinian women to talk about their life experiences under occupation and to empower them to become effective advocates themselves.

The testimonies collected provided the basis for 5 UN submissions which WCLAC lodged to UN Special Rapporteurs. The submissions covered the following topics: The war on Gaza, Night raids, Settler violence and attacks on human rights defenders.

A record number of briefings were implemented during 2015 and an estimated 1030 individuals were addressed. The presentations gave graphic evidence of the devastating effects that Human Rights

⁶⁵ Takamol consists of a procedural manual for service providers detailing protocol for the referral of women victims of violence, within the civil and governmental social/legal/health services sectors in the West Bank, to receive the service(s) they most urgently require, be it counselling, legal aid, emergency protection, medical treatment - or a combination of all four. A clear and systematic procedure for the referral of women victims of violence - if implemented in a joined-up and coherent manner across the board - will enable women victims of violence to receive the most comprehensive, relevant and timely services, thereby enhancing women's access to justice, adequate protection and socio-legal support in the oPt. Members of the National Committee for Combating Violence - comprising members of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) - presented Takamol to the Cabinet and it was formally accepted in early 2013 and ready for implementation across the West Bank. Capacity building subsequently took place with service providers in 2013 and 2014 with the aim of readying the social, legal and health service sectors for the implementation of the system.

⁶⁶ Grassroots organizations are partners with WCLAC working for women's rights in remote areas where service are scarce. Grassroots are local organizations working in their local community with the support of WCLAC.

violations have on women and their families. The advocacy team met with activists, journalists and community leaders in addition to UN officials, Parliamentarians and civil servants. The importance of these presentations lies in advocating on behalf of Palestinian women under occupation, to rally international support and to promote awareness of human rights violations on the international level

Reestablishment of the Protection Shelters' Steering Committee

WCLAC has successfully reactivated the Protection Shelter's Steering Committee, comprising the three shelters (Mehwar, Nablus and WCLAC) in the West Bank under the executive control of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA). The committee had been inactive for the past two years due to logistical and political reasons, owing to the change in the Palestinian Government three times in the past three years which led to a frequent rearrangement of ministers, and rotations in the staff within the ministries, and necessitated WCLAC to carry out fresh negotiations with the Minister of Social Affairs and staff members regarding the committee and the shelters' situation. The reestablishment is a major achievement for WCLAC, signaling greater stability and organization, and brings women issues back into the spotlight at the highest level of government. Re-establishment of the committee will facilitate the implementation of a standard operating system, greater professionalism in dealing with women whose lives are at risk, and will support finding mutual protection mechanisms in the national referral system.

With the participation of the previously mentioned parties, the Memorandum of Understanding between the three shelters was successfully signed. The MOU outlines the relationship between the shelters and the involved parties, specifically the Ministry of Social Affairs, organizes the referral system, and creates a united system for all of the shelters found in one agenda. It stipulates the role of each side and their responsibilities and creates mutual understanding between all the parties about the shelters and their system. In line with WCLAC's proposal, the official Memorandum of Understanding was signed in November and is now on the Social Affairs Minister's office waiting for the final approval and appointment of a new minister to sign it with.

WCLAC is planning on conducting a capacity building workshop in 2016 for the parties involved in the women's shelters; the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Police Department, and the Family Protection Unit, in order to raise awareness about the issue and train them on what to expect and what to do.

Drafting and dissemination of CEDAW reports

WCLAC was requested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to send data, regarding women under occupation and Israel's violations to IHL and women rights within the PA, in order to include it in the official report. WCLAC has played an instrumental role in the past in disseminating knowledge about CEDAW to both the government and civil society organizations. WCLAC has been helping in the process of training government partners in writing the official report, and civil society organisations in writing the shadow report.

During this time WCLAC, along with other civil societies and Human Rights' organisations, participated in workshops, one of which was organized by UNOCHR and other official duty barriers including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to discuss the implications of Palestine's accession to international conventions and treaties, especially CEDAW. As a result of this work WCLAC has been placed in a position of significant responsibility towards the CEDAW shadow report, which will be produced by civil society organisations. It has been assigned, along with other organizations, to be a part of the committee to draft the CEDAW shadow report with civil society organizations, and is responsible for writing the legal and social part of it. It has also been invited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to attend a workshop and offer input prior to the drafting of the official report, which will be sent to CEDAW.

Challenges

Ongoing changes in the PA government adversely affected coordination at the ministerial level. This was particularly the case with MoSA and MoJ. Ongoing changes in the government meant that coordination with MoSA on partnership and procedures of providing protection to women victims of violence at the shelter were discussed with two different ministers of social affairs. This is both an inefficient use of time, and raises questions about the sustainability of WCLAC's coordination at the government level. In addition, the changes in government resulted in frequent change of the protection department director. Invariably each time a new minister is appointed they seek rotation among the ministry to assert their new agenda, and women's protection is usually the first file to be changed. Therefore, WCLAC continuously finds itself under pressure to redefine aspects of the partnership with government and the themes of protection that had been identified with previous directors. After successfully managing to meet with MoJ who sits in Gaza who expressed his interest in issues related to establishment of the inheritance department and the extreme need to approve the draft penal code, he was replaced by a new minister as part of new changes in the Cabinet. This means that the whole process will be done again after appointing the new minister, who we could not meet so far.

Unequal and discriminatory laws prevented any attempt to empower women to claim their rights. Draft laws submitted to the presidents, such as the Penal Code and Family Protection from Violence Law, are still under discussion due to the dysfunctional status of the PLC and the lack of credible will from the Cabinet to approve these laws. The PLC has been unable to convene since early 2007, and amendments to laws by presidential decrees risk being revoked if PLC membership remains majority Hamas.

There is a lack of reinforcement of court decisions which continues to prevent women from claiming their rights, particularly in cases of alimony, divorce rights and custody. In some cases, lawyers use legal gaps in the law to avoid implementing certain court procedures. For example, if a court decision is obtained about alimony in favor of a woman, the lawyer of the husband might use gaps in the law by showing that the husband is not able to financially afford it. Therefore, the court decision will not be implemented. In addition, women remain constrained by stigma, within local communities and their own families, which continue to deter them from seeking their legal rights in the first place.

Occupation Policies: In the last quarter of the year 2015 there has been an accelerating increase in the number of Palestinians killed, attacked or imprisoned. Night Raids on Palestinian homes happened on a nightly basis that left women, children and whole families traumatized. The systematic Israeli violation of Human Rights and International Law has manifested itself in both the Israeli army practices and the settler's violence during this period. For WCLAC this meant more obstacles and a harder reality to implement its work through. Mobility became harder as clashes became a trend at the entrances of the big cities and more checkpoints were put in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Hebron and Jerusalem (where two of WCLAC's offices are) were hotspots for clashes.

Internal Organizational Challenges: After the loss of WCLAC's co-founder and General Director Maha Abu-Dayyeh, the center has gone through some organizational challenges. The dominating feature of this transitional period is the organizational external evaluation that the whole center is going through. An independent external evaluator was appointed to lead this evaluation process which will result in organizational changes based on the proposed recommendations. The external evaluation includes an implementation plan which will guide WCLAC in the process of restructuring and reconsolidation of the organization.

Strategic goal 1: Contribute to the protection and empowerment of women suffering discrimination and violence**1.1 Provide professional legal and social services to women who are victims of violence, abuse and gender-based discrimination:**

Through socio-legal counselling and protection services, WCLAC provides better understanding of women for their rights that enables them to claim their rights either through consultation or through the Sharia courts

In 2015 WCLAC managed to provide woman with protection for their rights and lives. 74% of the women who received social and legal counselling and consultation, reported improved understanding of their rights, which increased the number of women seeking to claim their rights in the Sharia' and Civil courts. WCLAC worked in close coordination with its partner organizations, therefore 10% of the women helped by WCLAC were referred by partner organizations.

Through its work, WCLAC focuses on bridging the gap between the inadequate Palestinian policies and women's legal rights due to the dysfunctional status of the PLC. In 2015, WCLAC managed to have two legal precedents which then became listed as laws in the Shari'a courts.

The first precedent emphasized everyone's right to get a fair court decision no matter how many judges have looked into the case (for more information please refer for the Highlight part of the report). And the second one emphasized article 8 of the Personal Status Law that concerns marriage from a "crazed" or "unbalanced" person which stipulates that, the judge shall allow the marriage from one that is crazed or unbalanced only if it has been proven through a medical report that this marriage will benefit him/her. Currently, a number of lawyers are using these judicial precedents and are asking WCLAC for the full copy of the court's decisions so they could use it in defence of women who have been misled.

Provide direct socio-legal services to women

WCLAC offers free lifesaving services to women survivors of violence through our 4 branches in Ramallah, Jerusalem, Hebron and Bethlehem via a variety of methods. Over the reporting period, WCLAC provided legal and social counselling to a total 1023 women: 454 received long-term legal and social counselling, from which 2 are women with disabilities, 49 received social counseling only and 28 received legal aid only; however the majority -377- received both legal and social services. 405 received in-courts representation, 170 had one-off legal consultations through the helpline and helpdesk, 45 out of this number (170) became clients who received long-term legal aid from WCLAC (included in the 405), so a total of 85 women received one-time legal consultations by trainee lawyers in the court; 260 had one-time joint socio-legal consultation, 15 of 260 were referred to WCLAC to receive long-term legal and social aid (included in the 405), so a total of 515 received one-time legal and social consultations only, 40 women were hosted at WCLAC's emergency shelter; and 16 women and their families were helped through family counseling, whereas 14 women received e-counseling.

A total of 517 women filed cases in courts over the reporting period, and the number of legal cases is 517. Sometimes the number of Legal cases is more than number of legal files because each woman can file up to 3 cases in court. In addition to the 517 cases, there are 106 cases which have remained in the court process since 2014, comprising a total of 623 separate cases. 22 women were referred to WCLAC by partners, and 70 of the cases have received case conferences. So far this year WCLAC obtained 235

legal verdicts in favour of women. Through a process of mediation, WCLAC supported relevant parties in reaching durable solutions to the problems faced by WCLAC's women clients whereby the woman was able to claim some or all of her rights via agreements signed by the husband/family member to honour her rights without bringing the case to court. Further, 80 out-of-court settlements were reached through out-of-court settlements or mediation facilitated by WCLAC's team of lawyers and social workers.

Success Story: Legal Aid

A case of a young woman was referred to WCLAC's service unit after spending one night in a Palestinian jail. The 20 years old university student living with her aunt went to the police station to file a harassment complaint about a man who she loved and promised to marry when she was a teenager. When the man was summoned to the police station he presented a clandestine marriage contract¹ that has the young woman's signature, and as this type of marriage contracts is illegal they were both detained pending investigation.

WCLAC's lawyer worked with the young woman and found that she was tricked into signing this paper when she was 15 years old after being told by the man that this is a bank paper that will enable him to take a bank loan in order to marry her. WCLAC's lawyer was able to prove that the contract was fraud and urge the police department to assign a gender-specialized prosecutor to look into the case.

The young woman was released on the same day, and a meeting was organized by WCLAC and its partners with the General Attorney, in which the importance of having a specialized prosecutor was addressed and a complaint was filed against the first prosecutor who looked into the case as he asked the lawyer in front of the victim and her aunt "how could you defend such a girl? If she was my daughter I would have killed her". The general prosecutor later received a warning from his supervisor and the aggressor was made to sign an affidavit to not harm or come near the young woman. The case is still ongoing in court.

Provide one-time legal and social consultations

WCLAC continues to provide one-time consultations to women (whether joint socio-legal consultations or legal only). The majority of these consultations took place following awareness-raising sessions, where women would individually approach WCLAC lawyers and social workers and ask personal questions related to the topics discussed, and ask for advice on how to make the right decisions and what steps to take.

WCLAC provided joint one-time socio-legal aid to 260 women. Most of the consultations revolved around marital rights as well as divorce, types of alimony, custody and the rights of divorced women. WCLAC successfully referred 8 women to other services providers when women's cases or immediate needs did not come under WCLAC's remit. Most of these cases were referred to MoSA where the Takamol protocol was put into action in order to ensure the professional and safe referral of women.

WCLAC provided one-time socio-legal consultations to 260 women. 50 of these women came to WCLAC's office following these one-time consultations, so that 20% of the women who receive consultations request social and/or legal services. This is a positive step, showing that WCLAC is causing

positive change, and the women are taking initiatives on their own and highly benefiting from the awareness-raising sessions and the consultations.

WCLAC sought to promote the e-counselling service through the satellite channel, Ma'an, which reaches 32% of the population in West Bank and Gaza strip, through 3 daily news flashes for the period of the whole month of June, and then again for three months starting October and ending in December. Additionally, WCLAC signed a contract with Ajyal radio station, after conducting an assessment and learning that it is the most popular Palestinian radio station. This way both Ajyal and Ma'an were airing a broadcast about the e-counselling service and spreading the word about it among the targeted audience and Palestinian society.

Empower women with guidance on taking cases to court and providing them with legal consultation

Throughout the year, WCLAC was able to assist 85 women, many of whom returned because their husbands had hired lawyers, and WCLAC's lawyers transferred their files to the on-going services in order to represent them. The majority of these cases were dealing with alimony disputes, as WCLAC prepared and empowered 24 women in filing alimony cases on their own and children's behalf, 11 women were also empowered through counselling sessions to raise their custody cases in courts. However, after evaluating this tool, WCLAC concluded that it has to have its lawyers follow up with cases in court as social and procedural obstacles are complicated. In an effort to provide women with reliable information, in an easy-to-understand manner, WCLAC distributed 650 copies of the alimony manual, and 700 of the custody manual.

WCLAC experienced a spike in demand for such 'in-court' legal aid, providing 158 women with legal consultations in civil and Sharia courts based in Ramallah, Hebron and Jerusalem, 50 of whom were referred to WCLAC's branches to receive more in-depth support. Consultations in the civil courts centred on the procedures department and the implementation of verdicts, whilst Sharia court consultations dealt with personal status issues, most prominently *nafaka*, custody, divorce, marriage and *mahr*. 56 sessions were held to provide women with legal consultations in civil courts upon their request, where women were provided with legal advice and counselling, legal procedures were explained to them in a clear and relevant way.

Continuation in services of free help-line for women seeking social and emergency counselling services

Due to restrictions on movement imposed by the Occupation and exacerbated by patriarchal norms and debilitating poverty, many women in dire need of socio-legal support find themselves unable to access it. However, women can now access legal and social support through a free helpline during WCLAC working hours (8am-3pm) and an online service operated round the clock by the Centre's lawyers and social workers on the number: 1800-80-70-60. During this period, a social worker was selected to oversee the helpline service and a total of 560 calls were received, representing a significant increase on the first semester of 2015, over which period the helpline was re-launched. 18 women were referred to receive long term social and legal counselling through the helpline. Similarly to the emergency helpline which was re-launched in 2014, WCLAC undertook in 2015 to promote the family counselling service, which was launched for the first time in 2014. Three TV and radio spots were allotted, the broadcasting material was produced and promotion of the service has begun.

		Ramallah	South of the Palestinian Territories	Jerusalem	Total
Type of service	Legal and social	114	210	53	377
	Legal	9	6	13	28
	Social	27	14	8	49
	Total	150	230	74	454

		Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Legal / Social Case	Marital obedience	2	2	0	4
	Custody & visits	18	22	8	48
	<i>Nafaka</i> (alimony) incl. rent	64+2	140+2	40	248
	<i>Mahr</i> (dowry)	13	16	6	35
	Divorce	58	52	19	129
	Family/Marital conflict	19	12	9	40
	Rights issues	7	6	0	13

		Ramallah	South of the Palestinian Territories	Jerusalem	Total
Level of education	Unknown	1	2	1	4
	No formal education	1	2	0	3
	Elementary school	13	21	7	41
	Primary school	33	52	17	102
	Secondary school	55	94	36	185
	Higher education	47	59	14	120
		Ramallah	South of the Palestinian Territories	Jerusalem	Total
Age	37 and over	45	78	22	145
	18 - 36	98	141	49	288
	18 and under	5	9	2	16
	Unknown	2	2	1	5

		Ramallah	South of the Palestinian Territories	Jerusalem	Total
Marital status	Abandoned	7	14	4	25
	Widowed	4	4	1	9
	Divorced	18	21	9	48
	Separated	6	5	4	15
	Married	25	31	18	74
	Engaged	1	1	1	3
	Single	2	6	4	12
	Sharia contract	4	10	3	17
	<i>Urfi</i> ^[1] contract	0	0	0	0
	Temporarily separated	83	138	30	251

Table 4. Source of Referral

		Ramallah	South of the Palestinian Territories	Jerusalem	Total
Source of Referral	Courts	77	105	7	198
	Police	4	7	0	11
	District councils	5	7	0	12
	MoSA	36	11	5	52
	Other institutions	17	32	21	70
	Individual	2	40	20	62
	Lawyers	2	5	8	15
	Centre's units	1	5	0	6
	Health Sector	0	3	0	3
	Other	7	15	13	35

Table 4. Type of work

		Ramallah	South of the Palestinian Territories	Jerusalem	Total
Type of work	Housewife	68	200	30	298

^[1] *Urfi* or clandestine marriage is an informal marriage contract, not registered with the state authorities

	Student	5	17	3	25
	Unemployed	15	13	15	43
	Private, government or civil society sector	15	27	14	56
	Informal work	8	11	10	29

		Ramallah	South of the Palestinian Territories	Jerusalem	Total
Perpetrator	Immediate Family	4	9	3	16
	Ex-husband	15	20	10	45
	Husband's family	5	11	1	17
	Husband	118	178	56	360
	Fiancé	6	9	4	19
	Other relatives	2	3	0	5

1.1.2 Maintain and develop the capacity of WCLAC's Service Unit to respond to the needs of Palestinian women:

In 2015, the Palestinian Counselling Centre (PCC) was contracted to conduct supervision of the entire Service Unit. The PCC held meetings together and carried out a needs assessment, reviewed and discussed the provisions of the supervision contract. Also, the psychological impact of difficult cases and how they affect the lawyers and social workers working on these cases was discussed, provided a much-needed outlet. As well as supervision meetings, WCLAC held periodic staff meetings in Ramallah and Hebron to discuss professional matters such as the work plan, and indicators and methods of implementation. Additionally, 4 bi-monthly meetings were held (3 hrs. each) to follow up on progress towards the Service Unit work plan.

WCLAC's Service Unit continues to develop and maintain strategic relations with relevant institutions including local authorities, security forces, the justice sector and MoSA to facilitate coherent socio-legal protection service provisions across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This enables us to deliver the most comprehensive care possible to the most vulnerable women, and lessen the possibility of women "slipping through the net" - something we seek to avoid under all circumstances.

In order to ensure the protection of women survivors of violence when accessing services, WCLAC held 12 meetings with partners including the police, MoSA and MoH to discuss interventions with emergency cases in the emergency shelter, and maintain good relations with the partners. 3 meetings with the emergency shelters and MoSA were held to develop an MOU between the 3 shelters in the West Bank under the supervision of MoSA. Eventually, WCLAC signed MoU with the three shelters and managed to reactivate the shelters' committee. Additionally, the emergency shelter's committee held 15 meetings to follow up on cases and coordinate cooperation with the specialized sectors.

1.1.3 Offer protection services to women survivors and those who are at risk of violence:

Provide emergency protection for women at risk of violence and develop an intervention plan for each

During the year 2015, WCLAC provided emergency protection to 40 women from all over the West Bank between the ages of 18-55 whose lives were at risk. The majority of these women were between the age of 20-35 suffering from family violence and being threatened with murder. Emergency shelter clients typically stay for up to one month according to Emergency Shelter procedures. Intervention plans and legal counselling are provided by the shelter's social worker and our lawyers for each client as needed. However, some of the clients this year stayed for over three months as Mehwar Center were closed for renovations and their clients were referred to us. The emergency shelter committee, made up of WCLAC, MoSA, the Family Protection Unit at the Police Department and the governorate, decided to refer ten women to other shelters for more long-term protection due to the nature of their cases and difficulties in communication to facilitate their reintegration into their communities. This referral is made upon carrying out a case conference for the client to define the intervention plan. 30 of the women were able to safely return to their families in accordance with the individual intervention efforts exerted by the Police Family Protection Unit and MoSA, 4 were referred to Mehwar to continue their stay at their emergency shelter as these women cases were complicated and required a long-term stay in the shelter, and the rest were referred to other institutions. 6 of the women at the shelter received legal counselling in addition to their stay. WCLAC faced some challenges in the emergency shelter, mainly due to the lack of dialogue between partners and shortcomings in the application of the Takamol protocol when referring women.

70 case conferences were held with the emergency shelter, MoSA, the Police and the district council to put in place a coherent and agreed upon work plan for each case in order to arrive at a durable solution for each woman and reintegrate her into her community and family with the least harm possible and guarantee the protection of her life. However, capacities of MoSA, the Police and the governorate's office provoked some delays and thus the women remained in the shelter longer. For example, the lack of an appropriate vehicle to transport the women from the shelter to another shelter or to the hospital or to her home leads to an unnecessary delay in the woman's stay, or the person responsible from MoSA for visiting the homes and assessing the level of threat is also responsible for the children and thus has an extremely busy schedule and sometimes ends up incapable of completing the tasks.

The Emergency Shelter as a legal and social entity is seen by WCLAC as the front line for the protection of women whose lives are in jeopardy. The shelter's work emphasizes the importance of applying the national referral system in a way that protects the lives of women who have no other resort.

Success Story:

A success story involved one of the women who received protection services at the emergency shelter. The woman mentioned that she had been sexually abused by her cousin but her father did not believe her story and threatened to kill her. The woman was under direct threat of being killed by her family which is part of the patriarchal mentality that puts blame on the woman. An intervention plan was made by the social worker at the shelter and later in cooperation with MOSA, WCLAC managed to meet with the father, identified the case and showed evidence that the abuser was the cousin. WCLAC managed to convince the father that his daughter should not be blamed and pay her life a price for this, as she is a victim. As a result the father was convinced to return his daughter back home and to find ways to protect her.

1.2 Raise awareness of women’s legal and social rights amongst Palestinian communities in the West Bank:

1.2.1 Raise awareness amongst Palestinian women so that they can identify and condemn negative practices against women and can access resources for help:

Awareness with housewives in the central WB and women in the seam zone⁶⁸

In 2015, WCLAC organized awareness-raising activities constituting 168 hours and targeting 156 women, in areas of the West Bank with difficult political, social and geographical circumstances; Beit Duqqa, Thubra, Khirbet Beit Sakaria, and Suwreef and Yatta and two places in Ramallah.

The aim of these activities is to educate women about their rights and allow them to freely discuss the issues they face daily and empower them to claim their rights. The discussions were highly interactive, indicating that women felt comfortable expressing their opinions. Feedback from housewives highlighted a better understanding of women’s human rights, an enhanced ability to identify types of violence, and an updated knowledge of service providers available to protect them. *(For a detailed list of Awareness-raising workshops for vulnerable women please refer to Appendix A)*

WCLAC conducted awareness-raising meetings in four different areas in the southern West Bank governorate of Hebron: Old City of Hebron (H2)⁶⁹, 4 meetings 25 women, Tel Rumeida, 3 meetings 30 women, Bir An-Nasari, 7 meetings 30 women, and Ash-Sheikh Neighborhood, 2 meetings 30 women. The topics included discrimination against women in Palestinian society, the significance of practicing prudence when marrying one’s children, women’s role in the workforce and the prejudice they face when working, and women and the labor law. In all of the groups, WCLAC lawyers held open discussions with the women regarding the Personal Status Law (PSL) in Palestine.

Participate in activities for the 16 Days of Activism

Workshop meeting as part of the “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” campaign

On the 9th of December 2015, the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling held a workshop in the old city of Hebron as part of the “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” campaign. The meeting focused on issues that are of high importance to women in Hebron and to the whole of the Palestinian society. Femicide and Israeli settler’s violence were on top of the agenda, as women in Palestine struggle on the internal level from a patriarchal system that results in several shapes of violence, as well as struggling on the external level from the Israeli occupation practices that result in further limiting the rights and freedoms of women.



In line with WCLAC’s goal to contribute to the protection and empowerment of women suffering

⁶⁸ This area consists of around 10 per cent of the West Bank and has been declared a closed military zone to Palestinians. See WCLAC’s report, [Life Behind the Wall](#), for more information.

⁶⁹ Under full Israeli control

discrimination and violence, the discussion focused on marginalized women living on the seam zones in Hebron and their constant suffering from the Israeli settler's targeted violence. A number of Palestinian women who live on the seam zone were honored for their strength. Additionally, WCLAC's upcoming report on femicide was presented and a discussion revolved around it. 65 people attended the workshop meeting. *(For a full list of activities please refer to Appendix F)*

Participate in activities on International Women's Day (8 March) with partner organizations

WCLAC also participated in activities on International Women's Day with partner organizations. The focus of this year's theme was 'Palestinian Women under Occupation'. WCLAC participated in the main event which took place under the auspices of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees and the NGO Forum. The event constituted a mass feminist march that headed towards Qalandia Checkpoint, affirming the message that violence against women is a primary result of the occupation. Another march took place in Tel Al-Rumeida, in support of the women who suffer from settlers' aggression. Additionally, WCLAC participated in Al-Quds University's seminar titled 'Protection of Women under Occupation, According to International Conventions and UNSC Resolution 1325', where the targeted audiences were judges in Palestinian courts and Criminal Law students. *(For a detailed list of activities please refer to Appendix E)*

Success Story: The empowering effects of awareness activities in marginalized areas

When Um Ahmed from East Jerusalem, a 40 year-old mother of 5, first came to WCLAC's awareness sessions for housewives in East Jerusalem she expressed that she was suffering in her marital life. She told the group that she was unhappy and felt stifled since her husband would often prevent her from simple everyday activities such as seeing her friends or going for a walk. According to Um Ahmed what frustrated her most was that she didn't know how to overcome the issues she was facing. She explained that she had reverted to the psychological coping mechanism of "erecting protective barriers" in order to prevent others from exploiting her.

As the weeks passed however, Um Ahmed began to open up and started to express her opinions and feelings on topics of the awareness raising discussions which focused on improving women's life skills, including communication and conflict mediation, in order to confront and overcome the pressures they face in their everyday lives in a way that does not harm their physical or psychological wellbeing. Um Ahmed reported that talking about the issues she faces and listening to other women's experiences made her feel less alone and eased the psychological pressure. In fact, Um Ahmed appreciated the positive impact of the meetings so much that that she decided to organize her own awareness groups in collaboration with WCLAC.

Um Ahmed took the initiative to organize all the logistics of the sessions including the venue and invitations, and coordinated with host organizations which were so impressed with her event management skills that they paid her for these arrangements. By applying the communication skills she learned through a series of workshops with WCLAC, Um Ahmed reported that she was able to convince her husband of her need to be active outside the home and during her most recent communications with WCLAC she mentioned that her martial life had improved. Um Ahmed's initiative also helped WCLAC, and the hosting organizations who work with at-risk women, to reach out to more marginalized women in similar positions, demonstrating the empowering potential of awareness sessions to transform participants into actors in their own lives and agents of change in their local communities.

1.2.2 Raise awareness within key target groups who can support a positive attitude towards women's rights:

Hold workshops on women's rights with youth and university students

WCLAC held 3 awareness-raising workshops about women issues at Bet Jala Vocational College, with an average of 22-25 students per workshop. The workshops covered a general understanding of the law, and discussed issues such as early marriage and the specific laws involved when entering into a marriage. Of the main topics handled was the Personal Status Law in Palestine, where the group discussed 'nafaqqa', divorce and self-affirmation. Another important topic was 'Values and Ethics'. A film was shown and the focus was on women survivors of torture, how to approach them and their cases, and how to help and be supportive. Many participants came forward with their personal experiences on the issue.

Six awareness raising works were carried out in five universities Bir Zeit, Al Quds University, Arab American University, Hebron, and Istiqlal/Jericho attended by 130 (51 male and 79 females). These students were from law, social science and psychology. This training aimed to increase student's awareness on discrimination against women in the Palestinian laws; especially the criminal law. In specific the awareness raising sessions discussed gender and gender based discrimination at the social and legal levels as an introductory session to define level of students understanding of these concepts. It thoroughly discussed the criminal law and discrimination women face in this law and protection procedures that are available and the gaps that prevent women from claiming their rights. Students were also provided with suggested mechanisms to support women to access their rights; especially through having a modern criminal law, family protection from violence law and the national referral system (Takamol). *(For a full list of University workshops please refer to Appendix B)*

These workshops gave special attention to CEDAW to define the gap between the criminal law and protection mechanisms mentioned in the international law and the Palestinian ones. This aims to increase students' knowledge on the importance of modifying existing laws to conform to international conventions that the PA signed without reservations.

In the feedback sessions during the last day of the training a significant number of students expressed their interest to do their dissertations on CEDAW and consequences of joining the international conventions on women's rights in Palestine. Students from Bir Zeit University who attended the training have established a Facebook page to create a platform for discussion on issues related to gender and human rights. They have also encouraged other students from their university to join this page and to sign for the winter camp WCLAC carried out in Dec.2015. A total of 20 students (11 males and 9 females) participated in the winter camp where intensive workshops were carried out during the 4 days on international conventions, criminal law and methods of advocating for women's rights.

Lead awareness-raising workshops for targeted groups and institutions

The Legal Aid Clinic and UNRWA approached WCLAC requesting it to conduct an awareness-raising workshop that discusses the issue of Palestinian Women in the Personal Status Law. WCLAC conducted the workshop in Ein Al-sultan Refugee Camp, where a group of 16 women participated and discussed issues related to marriage, polygamy, education, shared finances with their husbands and such. The diversity of opinions, and comfortable open discussions that took place allowed for a healthy and productive conversation. WCLAC conducted 10 awareness raising activities with local organisations about women's rights. The targeted groups were diverse (women, members of political parties, institutions). The topics discussed included: women's right to inheritance, family violence and its impact, social circumstances and the realities which Palestinian women face, and a background on WCLAC and its work and mission.

WCLAC and the Legal Aid Clinic in Al Istiqlal University conducted another awareness-raising session, upon the request of other institutions in Arab Dawahiq, in the aim of increasing women's awareness and focusing on the violations that women in that area face, that are related to family rights. The session also focused on the Personal Status Law, and targeted 15 women.

1.3 Build the capacity of service professionals and grassroots women's organisations to provide protection to women:

1.3.1 Extend women's service provision to underserved parts of Palestine through partnering and building the capacity of selected grassroots organisations:

Continue building the capacity of service provision staff at Tubas Charitable Society (TCS) and Al-Najdah

WCLAC has been following up on the quality of the work and the progression of implementing the work plan with grassroots organizations. WCLAC has also been advancing its accounting system, integrating the project budgets and getting familiar with financial requirements. In 2015, WCLAC conducted several follow-up meetings with grassroots organizations. 16 programmatic/software follow-up meetings have convened, 8 of which were carried out with 5 participants from the staff and management team of Al-Najdah, and another 8 were carried out with 7 participants from the staff and management team of TCS. Also 24 financial follow-up meetings convened for both charities to review all financial procedures and provide constructive feedback.

WCLAC's Capacity Building Unit developed an awareness curriculum, to be used to develop a basis for the work conducted with the women in addition to conducting 3 meetings with the staff. During this year, the support and supervision offered to the service staff was well-organized due to the diverse selection of facilitators offering guidance to WCLAC's lawyers and social workers. 15 specialized supervision sessions were offered, constituting 45 hours: 9 collective sessions, 1 social supervision session, 5 legal supervision sessions, and 8 lawyers and social workers participated. The topics included: analyzing social conditions, constructive criticism within the working team, examining child custody lawsuits, examining separation and divorce lawsuits, analyzing the legal implications of dowry, economic empowerment and its role in supporting women survivors of torture. These interventions enabled both TCS and Al-Najdah to provide legal and social guidance services and awareness to women in marginalized areas.

Al-Najdah society provided legal and social guidance to 48 women in need and offered 44 awareness-raising meetings, targeting 597 participants, 116 of whom were males, and discussed issues related to the Personal Status Law, the marriage contract, 'maher' (dowry), divorce and separating shared finances.

TCS provided legal and social guidance to 117 women in need. TCS noted the improvement in the women's commitment to attend the guidance meetings, and the increased level of trust between the women and the facilitators. TCS offered 39 awareness-raising meetings in Jenin and Tubas, and discussed issues related to violence against women, and the role of the Police and Family Protection services. These meetings targeted 645 participants (24 males), namely members of administrative bodies, teachers, students and housewives.

WCLAC has been working on improving the capacity of grassroots organizations in their fundraising and relations with donors. During the reporting period, TCS received direct approval from Oxfam Novib to

receive a donation to manage a mobile clinic for women in the valleys. Furthermore, both Al-Najdah and TCS were able to foster relationships with the local community, through carrying out centralized activities and workshops during the week of 8th of March.

1.3.2 Train state and non-state service providers in order to develop best practices in dealing with women victims of violence:

Build the capacity of service providers in the referral system to apply best practices for working with women victims of violence

In order for women victims of violence to get adequate treatment when resorting to medical and police services, WCLAC worked on building the capacity of these service providers from MOSA, MOH and Police Family Protection Unit. After a number of workshops and theoretical and practical trainings, the beneficiaries showed an increased knowledge from 18% to 91% of gender-related terminology, issues and the National Referral System. WCLAC also carried out raising awareness workshops with community activists on GBV issues, women's rights and the National referral System in the interest of providing a well-aware network of organizations and civil society workers who know how to deal with women subjected to violence. The importance of these workshops is emphasized by the attendance of women in leadership positions.

1000 copies of methods of protection of women victims of violence manual were printed and distributed. 60 community activists received training on utilizing the protection manual of women victims of violence. MOU was signed between the 3 protection shelters and service providers. 80% of service providers who participate in TOT training have the capacity to train their colleagues in using the national referral system, and these service providers held 18 training workshops about Referral System for 338 of their colleagues. 500 copies and training manual prepared, printed and distributed.

Moreover, WCLAC is striving to develop a partnership with the Justice Sector due to its significant role in helping women reach justice. WCLAC's role focuses on providing the Public Prosecution Office with the necessary knowledge and tools to be able to resolve women cases from a legal, social and psychological angle. WCLAC has been communicating with the Public Prosecution Office through meetings, reviews and direct correspondence.

Strategic goal 2: Promote women's rights and combat negative practices against women

WCLAC seeks long term Impacts through the attitudes change and the better understanding of women's rights by the different community segments. Creating catalysts for change that advocate women protection is what WCLAC works on through establishing networks of professionals, youth volunteers, activists etc. Social Media is also an inseparable part of this advocacy work as will be detailed in this section.

2.1 Contribute to the development of gender-sensitive legislation and institutional policies that support, protect and empower women in the public and private spheres:

2.1.1 Identify inadequacies within the judicial system related to cases of femicide and incest:

Document and follow-up on cases of femicide and incest

During 2015, a complete methodology has been developed to document cases of femicide and incest. The methodology has been developed following a predefined protocol, which places WCLAC in a comprehensive position with access to all of the details; this then enables WCLAC to carry out its analysis. WCLAC faces a number of challenges throughout this process, which include the difficulty

arising from the frequent rotations of governmental officials, which calls for the need to reestablish relationships and rebuild trust. The General Attorney's office doesn't allow WCLAC to access to the case files, leaving WCLAC under a time constraint. There is also a lack of communication between the prosecutor's office and the Police Department, which leaves WCLAC with the need to arrange for meetings with official bodies independently. The involved official bodies also tend to hide very sensitive information from WCLAC. Despite all these difficulties, there is an official document signed by WCLAC, the Public Prosecution Office and the Police Department, allowing WCLAC to have access to the files and copy the necessary information. In response to the challenges faced, WCLAC is considering other mechanisms to solve the issues.

WCLAC continues to be a reliable resource in documenting cases of femicide and incest in Palestine, WCLAC is preparing an Analysis Report about femicide for the year 2014/2015. During this year there has been 17 femicide cases, 9 in Gaza and 8 in the West Bank. There have been 4 sexual assault cases, 2 in the city of Qalqilya, 1 in Jerusalem's suburbs and another one in Gaza. WCLAC faces a great responsibility to reorganize its agendas that discuss developing procedures that deal with these crimes. WCLAC's field researchers have visited the Police Department and the Public Prosecution Office in different governorates, (5 visits to Police department in Ramallah, 10 to Qalqilya's and 6 to Hebron's) in order to get familiar with the different bodies involved, and for the official bodies to get familiar with the researchers. These exchanges instill a reliable communication line between the two. There are some challenges facing the process of observation and documentation, which include WCLAC's inability to gather detailed information because of the involvement of several uninvolved sides, and the fact that these sides take up the role of releasing sensitive information without being specialized in the issue. Additionally in some cases WCLAC is unable to get the required information about the case, due to the fear of the witnesses of giving information and getting hurt. This happens especially in Gaza, where currently there is a femicide case on hold as witnesses are afraid of speaking up. Also, the observation and documentation process deals with collecting and analyzing very sensitive information, which can ultimately lead to the death of the victim.

2.1.2 Propose reforms based on an analysis of existing legislation and institutional policies which have a specific impact on women's rights

After long procrastination from the Ministry of Labor, the Social Security Law draft was sent to WCLAC, reviewed, and resource material and data was collected, focusing on women rights. This draft helped WCLAC in the second half of 2015, when it worked on conducting separate interviews and documenting women's experiences in dealing with the lack of Social Security Law. WCLAC documented cases of 6 women, whose social and economic rights were violated as a result of the absence of the Social Security Law, which should be the best guarantee for social security and societal's safety. The 6 women used to work in kindergarten's and they suffered from very low wages, no work contracts, arbitrary expulsion from work without end of service payment, unpaid maternity leave and more. One woman has been working with a kindergarten for 800 ILS for 18 years and her salary has not increased all through these years.

These interviews and field visits were collected, in order to present them to the involved decision makers for them to understand the issues that exist in the system in order to focus on the required modifications. By reading literature and conducting comparisons with neighboring countries, WCLAC conducted an initial review of the Arab and local legislation related to Social Security. WCLAC will issue a comprehensive report on social security, which will help in the process of developing the law.

As for banking procedures related to women, coordination and attendance to meetings has occurred between WCLAC and the Palestinian Monetary Authority to prepare for a workshop for the banks, in

conjunction with the Monetary Authority. The workshop occurred on the 10th of November 2015, discussed and approved women's ability to open bank accounts for their children. Additionally, WCLAC has presented the results of these meetings to the legal advisor of the Monetary Authority, and there was consensus about the importance of the amendments concerning the ability to open bank accounts for children through their mothers. Official generalization was sent to the banks from the Monetary Authority to reinforce to bank personnel that women are eligible to open bank accounts for their kids and to make sure that women are better informed and explained to about their rights.

2.1.3 Advocate for the passage of draft legislation that protects women's rights

Continue to advocate and lobby for the adoption of the Law on Family Protection from Violence

In the beginning of 2015, the Family Protection from Violence Law was distributed to the different ministries for revision and feedback. The Ministry of Justice held a conference to discuss the Law, and during the conference the role of WCLAC was highly appreciated. The council of ministries sent the rough draft of the Law to all of the ministries and concerned parties, which is when WCLAC was able to add notes and ideas to the Law. This was followed by a workshop conducted by the NGO Forum to discuss final comments, in which WCLAC participated.

Continue to advocate and lobby for the adoption of the referral system (Takamol)

WCLAC is working on enhancing the referral system to protect women who have been threatened with their lives. WCLAC is evaluating and monitoring the extent to which the referral system is being properly applied in order to guarantee the activation of the system against the crime doers. The results revealed many shortcomings in the use of the system. A factual document has been released during an official workshop organized by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which included all the sectors. The document was used as a referral source for all of the involved parties.

Continue to advocate and lobby for the adoption of the Criminal Law

WCLAC initiated a campaign in February 2015, titled 'For Life... Against Violence,' advocating the adoption of the Penal Code (Criminal Law). The campaign was organized in order to align Palestinian Law with International Agreements, especially CEDAW. The campaign called on the Palestinian State to adopt the signature on the protocol annexed to CEDAW. It identified gaps in the current Criminal Law and highlighted the importance of the media campaign (both on TV and Radio) to educate the public on the topic. WCLAC held intensive meetings with decisions makers in different governorates on the significance of their role in advocating for the draft of the Criminal Law. The campaign continued throughout the entire year of 2015, aiming to reach agreement with the relevant actors, and decision makers especially members of the PLC, and gather support for cases dealing with women and the law.

Different innovative approaches were taken by WCLAC as part of this campaign; a billboard was designed with the project slogan "For Life ...Against Violence". 10 billboards were erected in different parts of the West Bank for a period of one month in Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron. These were hanged in main streets in the three cities to ensure that they are visible and can be seen by the general public.

Three radio spots were designed and broadcasted for a period of one month in 24 FM Radio station. Each spot consisted of a specific message around the criminal law and were broadcasted during the peak time.

A TV spot was also designed and aired in Ma'an Network for one month with a specific message on the criminal law. This spot reached a total of 990,000 audiences in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza, and a brochure was produced. The brochure identifies the importance of having a new modified and modern criminal law, gaps in the current criminal law that discriminates against women and the next steps required to modify the law.

2.2 Advocate for Palestinian women’s rights in cooperation with local and international networks and mobilize support for a culture of respect for women’s rights:

2.2.1 Engage with active networks and coalitions to support women’s rights:

Effectively represent WCLAC within its current coalitions and networks

The Palestinian Human Rights Council organized a field visit in Gaza, designed to give solidarity with the people of Gaza, during the period April 20-24, 2015, in which WCLAC participated. Other governmental, nongovernmental and prominent organizations participated and jointly met with the commissioner of the Human Rights Council, carried out intense field visits throughout Gaza, and participated in a panel discussion organized by the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network, under the title ‘National Challenges and the Role of Civil Work’.

Moreover, WCLAC was directly involved in the National Committee⁷⁰ for Women’s Employment, and was a main participant in the final version of the National Plan. The National Plan is very relevant to WCLAC’s work; therefore WCLAC was a valuable participant. The plan focused on many aspects, including women in the workforce, activating the committee in order to provide women with jobs that have equal pay, and to contribute in building the infrastructure for the employment of women.

During this year, WCLAC continued its involvement and interaction with the NGO Forum on Violence against Women (Al Muntada), as it participated in the Family Protection from Violence Law conference which was held on 27/04/2015. WCLAC signed the petition for the campaign ‘Bint Al-Balad’ addressed to the Palestinian president, demanding he exerts pressure and enforces laws which secure women rights in the fight against femicide and incest. WCLAC participated in the wording of an official letter sent to the prosecution office, which addresses the Public Prosecution Office and includes complaints about the procedures taken against women by the Public Prosecution office. WCLAC participated in a workshop on 04/06/2015 organized to discuss the draft of the Family Protection from Violence Law. WCLAC also participated in the preparation and planning meetings for the "16 Days Activism" campaign, and took part in the "witness" workshop that is part of the campaign. In this workshop and under the slogan "Ending Occupation is Ending Violence"; WCLAC delivered the concluding speech and urged the different country's representatives to exert pressure on their governments to end the occupation.

WCLAC is an active member in the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, and has participated in two meetings held this year one in February and one in August. The meeting in February discussed accountability and liability, and based on the results, WCLAC adopted its working procedures of 2015 and the coming year of 2016. And the other meeting was a workshop in Alexandria for four days under the title "organizational auditing according to gender". Additionally, a document on "Women, Peace and

⁷⁰ 1) National Committee for Women’s Employment (NCWE); 2) NGO Forum for combating VAW (Al Muntada); 3) SALMA Network against violence against women in the Arab world; 4) AISHA Network (Arab Women’s Forum); 5) Arabic Network for Monitoring and Changing the Image of Women and Men in Media (ANMCWM); 6) MUSAWA Coalition (Equality Without Reservations); 7) Alimony Fund; 8) Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN); 9) Palestinian Forum for Safe Abortion (HEMAYA); 10) National Coalition to implement Resolution 1325 in Palestine; 11) The Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem; 12) Juzour Network (political participation of women); 13) The Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship Education Network (ANHRE); 14) National Committee to Combat VAW; 15) Palestinian Council of Human Rights Organisations (PCHR); 16) Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO); 17) Media and Rights Coalition to Ensure Implementation of Court Decisions; 18) Primary Psychosocial Support Team (PRCS); 19) Supreme Judicial Council Research Committee; 20) Council for Family Affairs; 21) Towasol (communication) Programme Committee; 22) Committee of Bereaved Women; 23) Child Protection Network; 24) National Team for Media Development.

Security" was produced by WCLAC and translated into 3 languages. The document was published on the 31st of October 2015 in the Euro-Med website⁷¹.

WCLAC participated in the coalition for UNSC Resolution 1325 in order to reach a strategy that protects women under occupation and holds offenders accountable. As a result of the coalition and its work, there is now a strategic national plan which revolves around protecting women, and based on that, WCLAC now has many more tasks to look forward to, which include bringing into focus the violations committed by the occupation against women, and the need to create regional and international strategies that support the progression of holding the offenders accountable.

2.2.2 Increase coverage of women's rights issues in mainstream and social media:

Build a network of media professionals that support women's rights

WCLAC has been successful in maintaining and developing strong relations with media professionals, and has done so by staying in constant contact with the local media network, through a mailing list, and by keeping the network up-to-date with WCLAC's activities and reports. Approximately 32 media sources share WCLAC's news by broadcasting the update exactly in the same form WCLAC prepares it. 19 press releases were published in 65 different media outlets and 3 press conferences were published in 7 different news websites. Also, WCLAC has been participating in a variety of activities prepared by media institutions or WCLAC partner organizations.

WCLAC carried out an activity where the focus was women's right to life, and displayed real life stories of women who have been killed and held a discussion of the problems and the background that violated these women's rights to life.

WCLAC is also keeping up with the Social Media including Facebook and YouTube, 330 updates were published on WCLAC's Facebook page between 01/01/2015 and 30/11/2015, and 8 YouTube short videos.

2.3 Empower youth volunteer networks to publicize women's rights issues within their communities:

2.3.1 Form and develop a network of volunteers that advocate for women's rights within Palestinian communities:

Form and develop a network of volunteers that advocate for women's rights within Palestinian communities

WCLAC organized 27 meetings, 81 hours, with the volunteer groups (191 volunteers) to evaluate and monitor their work in Hebron, Bethlehem, Jericho and Tulkarem, where they discussed the work plan, familiarized themselves with the goals of the organization, and provided the trainees with the necessary analyzing skills. A committee has been formed from the volunteer group to follow up on the execution of activities, in order to promote volunteers' participation and distribute their roles. WCLAC also organized a meeting to exchange experiences between volunteers over a period of 6 hours, in the aim of creating a shared space for the volunteers to exchange experience. WCLAC volunteers also conducted sessions in the beginning of the year to assess the community's needs. *(For a full list of Volunteer Cluster Activities please refer to Appendix K)*

⁷¹ For paper, please access this link: <http://euromedrights.org/publication/15th-anniversary-of-the-un-sc-resolution-1325-on-women-peace-and-security-by-lamya-shalaldif-opt/>

Success Story: Volunteers innovation through social Media



WCLAC offered volunteers a training on Social Media, how and when is the best time to upload pictures and publish news and how to use this tool to advocate for causes. After the training, volunteers decided to start a Facebook page that calls for changing the stereotypical image of women being adequate for certain roles but not others. Within the first few weeks of the page it gathered 3,000 likes.

Success Story: Innovative volunteer project

In a collaborative effort which brought together WCLAC volunteers from all 4 clusters (Tulkarem, Hebron, Jericho and Bethlehem), young male and female community actors' worked together to transform a disused public space into a park where women and children can relax and enjoy themselves.

The village of Amoria near the northern city of Nablus was selected as the site for intervention due to its isolated position and dearth of services, especially for women and girls, in addition to its stunning hilltop location and the fact that it is at risk of being confiscated by Israel for the expansion of nearby illegal settlements.

In this way, the intervention also acted as a form of protection for the local community, whereby the presence of local residents presents a challenge to Israeli forces seeking to expropriate the land – a vital source of livelihood for the village. The intervention also enhanced volunteers' cooperation with the local community and taught them how to use recycled materials to create a picnic area for women by transforming rubber tyres and metal sheeting into seats and tables with pathways marked out by tree saplings.

*Tala Abu Haddad (Not real name), a volunteer in her 20s, said about the activity:

"Today was by far the most enjoyable day I have ever experienced as a volunteer; the result of this activity provides a real service for women and has taught us how to transform materials that some people might consider rubbish into things that can be of use."

WCLAC volunteers making a seating area out of disused tires and rocks



Work with the volunteer groups to facilitate the creation of a network of local community organizations with the goal of unifying efforts in working towards women's rights

WCLAC supported the volunteers in creating new partnerships with local organizations in order to unite the shared efforts which aspire to support and advocate women cases. WCLAC did so by accompanying the volunteers on their visits to the interested local organizations, and shedding a light on the issue of having insufficient resources and services available to women. The local organizations were welcoming and offered the volunteers the space to discuss their concerns.

The volunteers organized workshop in Hebron to handle issues related to experiences in working as a volunteer; another workshop was conducted in Bethlehem which discussed femicide with the presence of 104 participants. WCLAC organized a training workshop in the northern part of the West Bank focused on teaching the volunteers how to advocate for women and protect them from violence. The workshop lasted 5 days, with 22 participants. There were 4 follow-up meetings organized by WCLAC in order to make sure the new volunteers are progressing on track. Also, volunteers decided to honor 'WCLAC Shelter House Mothers' working in the 3 women's shelters across the West Bank including WCLAC's Emergency Shelter. The volunteers arranged all the logistics of the event including the venue, invitations, music, food and awards. In another event, the volunteers honored former Palestinian women prisoners of conscience in order to highlight and celebrate the role of women in the struggle for liberation and self-determination. *(For a full list of activities organized by volunteer clusters please refer to Appendix L)*

2.4 Advocate for Palestinian women living under the Israeli occupation:

2.4.1 Highlight the impact of Israel's human rights violations on Palestinian women:

Document and analyze Israeli violations against Palestinian women

During 2015, international advocacy work built on previous years' achievements. A total of 168 testimonies were collected from women living under occupation in East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The testimonies covered a number of issues including property destruction, denial of family rights, settler and soldier violence, night raids and movement restriction in addition to covering issues that affected women in Gaza and in East Jerusalem. The testimonies were distributed as follows: 136 from the West Bank, 11 from Gaza and 21 from East Jerusalem.

Conduct advocacy activities using innovative tools

A total of 151 voices were produced and posted on WCLAC's English Language website. The Voices were based on the testimonies collected by the field workers and reflected issues that affected a relatively large number of women in diverse geographical areas. The Voices are 600-800 words long and are supported by a photograph. A total of 12 Bulletins were produced and distributed electronically. The Bulletins covered a diverse number of issues and included original materials prepared by the International Advocacy team. The Bulletins were distributed to WCLAC's mailing list which includes hundreds of subscribers in addition to posting them on WCLAC's English Language Facebook and Twitter accounts. The Bulletins also covered domestic issues that affect Palestinian women and also highlighted some of WCLAC's other unit's work and achievements.

A total of 18 public statements were issued during 2015. The statements covered a diverse number of issues including a statement on the report of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Gaza, a statement on the shooting of WCLAC's field researched during a peaceful demonstration in her village, a statement on WCLAC's submission to 3 UN Special Rapporteurs on night raids on Palestinian homes, a statement on WCLAC's most recent publication "Jerusalem: A City on Edge", a statement on WCLAC's submission to the UN on settler violence a statement on a resolution on Palestinian women issued by the UN

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) during its 59th session held in New York in March of this year in addition to other topics⁷².

In May of this year the International Advocacy team produced a new report entitled Jerusalem: A City on Edge⁷³. The report focuses on some of the current pressures facing Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem as seen through women's eyes. The report is based on 100 testimonies of women collected between 2012 and 2015 and is the second in a series of reports produced under the project "Protect the Rights and Improve the Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in East Jerusalem" which is funded by the European Union and co-financed by Oxfam Novib. The report graphically describes, through women's voices, a community deliberately and systematically placed under enormous physical and psychological pressures with the apparent intention of making the day-to-day life for Palestinians unbearable.

Between 5th-13th February, WCLAC's international advocacy unit participated in a five city tour of Norway to highlight the impact of military night raids on Palestinian communities located near Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The tour was organised by the Quakers and included speaking engagements in Oslo, Bergen, Kristiansand, Drammen and Hønefoss. During the tour, WCLAC addressed approximately 350 people highlighting the devastating impact that Israeli settlements have on Palestinian communities nearby due to the increased military presence. WCLAC also gave a presentation in the Norwegian Parliament and gave interviews to two newspapers: Klassekampen and Arbejderen.

Between 14th and the 20th of June 2015, a two-country European advocacy tour was conducted by WCLAC and Oxfam Novib in June to highlight some of the issues affecting Palestinian women in East Jerusalem. As one of the organisations participating in the EU/Oxfam-funded project "Protect the Rights and Improve the Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in East Jerusalem" WCLAC focused on a number of issues relating to East Jerusalem including: night raids/arrests; settler violence; property destruction; and family reunification. In the Netherlands, the delegation had meetings at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Parliament, and met with civil society representatives in addition to journalist from two Dutch newspapers. In Geneva the delegation met with the staff of the UN Special Procedures.

Over this reporting period a total of 61 targeted advocacy interventions and field trips were conducted targeting a wide range of audiences including diplomats, college students, faith leaders, community organizers, researchers, activists, journalists and politicians. This form of advocacy proved to be very effective, with long-lasting impact on the participants that will not easily fade away. Palestinian women, especially mothers, proved to be outspoken advocates and articulate speakers. Visiting delegations were accompanied to Ofer Military Court where they attended court hearings of loved ones. The delegations spoke to the families in the waiting room and were shocked by the level of injustice. Military court visits proved to be a very effective and innovative form of advocacy. Others were given briefings and presentations either in the office or at their hotels. A large number of Palestinian women took active part in the briefings and gained a lot of experience along the way. They felt empowered and their self-confidence was strengthened.

⁷² WCLAC, Public Statements Archive <http://www.wclac.org/english/einside.php?id=142>

⁷³ WCLAC, Jerusalem: A City on Edge, 23 July 2015 <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1532>

Success Story: Speaking tours abroad inspire study trips to Palestine

On a recent speaking tour in Norway, organized by representatives from various Norwegian civil society and community organizations working with women, WCLAC delivered a talk to a group who were so inspired by the Centre's work that they decided to make a trip to Palestine to see for themselves how the policies and practices of Israeli military occupation impact Palestinian women in very specific ways.

WCLAC decided to focus on night raids since they can have a lasting and traumatic effect on Palestinian women and their children, especially since minors are often the target of night raids. Arrested for alleged offenses, most commonly stone throwing, they are taken from their families at night by heavily armed soldiers who sometimes use explosives to break into the house. Moreover, night raids are often conducted arbitrarily as a form of collective punishment. Results of a recent study conducted by WCLAC fieldworkers over 6 months in the West Bank village of Deir Nadham showed that night raids take place an average of once every other night and that many women stay awake until 5am every night to ensure that they are dressed and ready when the soldiers break into their homes.

Following WCLAC's talk in Norway, the Centre was pleased to receive an email from one of the groups they had spoken to, asking if WCLAC could facilitate a field trip to reveal the reality of life for Palestinian women living under military occupation. WCLAC arranged for them to visit the central West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, where the group met and talked with women still suffering the consequences of night raids. WCLAC later found out that both the Norwegian parliament and the Dutch parliament raised the issue of night raids in parliamentary debates on the Occupied Palestinian Territories following WCLAC's trip to the region.

UN submissions

In January of this year WCLAC lodged a submission to the International Commission of Inquiry into Gaza which included 36 eyewitness testimonies collected by WCLAC's Gaza fieldworkers. This came in response to an invitation by the Commission for organizations to submit evidence and relevant materials following the 2014 summer war on Gaza. The evidence submitted by WCLAC included cases involving fatalities, destruction of ambulances, ineffectual or false warnings provided by the military of an impending attack, displacement and property destruction. As a result of this submission WCLAC was referenced in the Commission's final report which was released in June of this year.⁷⁴

In June WCLAC lodged a submission with three UN Special Rapporteurs concerning the widespread and systematic use of night raids by the Israeli military on Palestinian family homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem⁷⁵. The submission dealt with the devastating impact that repeated night raids have on affected communities and was supported by 100 testimonies collected from women in 34 locations who experienced raids in 2014 and 2015.

⁷⁴ For full text of the submission, follow the link: <http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/UN%20COMMISSION%20OF%20INQUIRY%20-%20GAZA.pdf>

⁷⁵ For full text of submission, follow the link: <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1560>

The submission conservatively estimates that the Israeli military is currently conducting over 1,300 night raids on Palestinian communities each year, which equates to over 65,000 night raids since Israeli martial law was imposed on the West Bank in June 1967⁷⁶.

In July WCLAC and Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR) submitted a joint complaint to the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on Violence against Women and Human Rights Defenders concerning the frequent targeting of the Palestinian human rights defender, Mrs Manal Tamimi, by Israeli military authorities⁷⁷.

In September WCLAC lodged a submission with two UN Special Rapporteurs providing an update on the situation on the ground relating to the impact of settler violence on women in the West Bank⁷⁸. This follows the publication of a UN report on Israeli settlement activity in January 2013⁷⁹ which found, *inter alia*, that the establishment of the settlements has fragmented the West Bank placing at risk the possibility of a Palestinian State, and by implication, a viable two state solution – a stated policy goal of the US, EU and UN⁸⁰.

In November WCLAC lodged a follow-up submission with the UN concerning the devastating impact that Israeli military night raids are having on Palestinian women and families in the West Bank. The latest submission focuses on night raids that occurred in just one month – October 2015 – and is based on 19 testimonies provided to WCLAC by affected women⁸¹.

Disseminate WCLAC reports and publications

Hard copies of WCLAC's publications were distributed by mail and handed out to visiting delegations during briefings and field visits. They provided the targeted groups with succinct historical, legal and political background supported by dozens of testimonies collected from women who graphically described the day-to-day realities for Palestinians living under occupation. WCLAC's monthly Bulletins were distributed electronically to the mailing list which included hundreds of subscribers.

WCLAC's original materials and publications were also made public via social media (Facebook and Twitter) which helped to reach out to a wider audience. WCLAC's English language website continued to be regularly fed with original up-to-date materials with positive images of women that projected resilience and determination.

2.4.2 Build the capacity of local human rights activists to advocate on behalf of Palestinian women:

Empower women whose rights have been violated by the occupation to advocate for their own rights

On-going supervision and training of the small number of fieldworkers took place through on the job-training and one-to-one coaching. The fieldworkers' documentation and writing skills improved tremendously. This activity was conducted by the Unit's field work coordinator who demonstrated outstanding ability to coach the fieldworkers and to gently push them towards excellence.

⁷⁶ For full text of the submission follow this link: <http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/NIGHT%20RAIDS.pdf>

⁷⁷ For full text of the complaint follow this link: <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1601>

⁷⁸ For full text of submission on settler violence, follow the link: <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1560>

⁷⁹ Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, twenty second session http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/Advanced_Unedited_Version_FFM_Settlements.pdf

⁸⁰ For full text of the submission follow this link: <http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/SETTLER%20VIOLENCE%20-%20SEP%202015.pdf>

⁸¹ WCLAC, Israeli military night-raids on Palestinian residences in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, 11 November 2015.

<http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/NIGHT%20RAIDS%20-%20UPDATE%20-%20NOV%202015.pdf>

Empowering affected women and equipping them with the skills and tools needed to help them advocate for themselves came side by side along efforts to document their stories. In fact, this aspect of the project was at the heart of its success. Women who never before felt comfortable speaking to strangers have become “spokes persons” for their families and communities. Husbands, sons, brothers and uncles sat and listened attentively as women in their families articulated their stories and successfully communicated their thoughts, feelings, fears, hopes and aspirations.

Strategic goal 3: Develop institutional and human capacity in order to ensure the sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of WCLAC

3.1 Enhance the efficiency of WCLAC’s internal operations:

3.1.2 Enhance WCLAC’s programme and information systems:

Undertake evaluations of WCLAC’s programmes

While preparing the current strategy, WCLAC undertook a rapid assessment of its 2013-2015 strategic plan in cooperation with Gender At Work (G@W), followed by a rapid assessment of its past strategic plan which started in 2014-2015. As a result, feedback was collected from a combination of surveys, circulated by survey monkey, to a number of stakeholders and one-to-one interviews and questionnaires undertaken with other individuals. The survey was completed by 62 beneficiaries (34 females and 28 males), 31 clients (including 5 in emergency shelters), 7 partners/donors and 20 staff members. The surveys’ responses hold a strong testimony to WCLAC’s relevance as clients were highly satisfied with WCLAC’s services; a) Relevance: Beneficiaries, donor/partners and staff rated most highly legal and social services for women in Palestine; b) Effectiveness - Nearly 90 per cent of clients provided positive ratings of WCLAC’s accessibility, timeliness and professionalism and over 90 per cent noted the high quality or acceptable quality of WCLAC’s legal counseling, social counseling and awareness and empowerment activities; c) Impact - WCLAC services have made a notable contribution to their clients’ and beneficiaries’ knowledge of their rights and their sense of empowerment and control over their lives; d) WCLAC’s future programmes and services - Beneficiaries and clients prioritize awareness-raising workshops as the most important for future investment. Staff prioritize policy advocacy and partners/donors focus on strengthening WCLAC’s capacity. An area requiring strengthening raised by staff, beneficiaries and partners was WCLAC’s use of media, publicity and large-scale awareness campaigns.

At the institutional development level, the staff rated WCLAC’s achievements in maintaining a diversity of funding sources and improving internal policies and practices most highly. The area where staff identified the slowest progress was in promoting critical thinking about women’s rights discourse amongst staff. Some staff highlighted areas requiring greater attention in relation to the work environment.

Lessons learnt

WCLAC has undertaken several internal and external assessments of its work, and has used the results as guidance when defining the upcoming 5 year strategic plan (2016-2020). From previous assessments WCLAC has learned that it benefits most from using legal precedents and strategic litigations. WCLAC aims to use strategic litigation in the upcoming plan in order to develop its publications to promote women’s rights in the legal system. WCLAC has identified the case studies which it will utilize for raising awareness about new issues regarding the law and women’s human rights. Also from previous assessments WCLAC has learned the significance of raising awareness and expanding the range of its activities and community segments to create societal change. In its new strategy, WCLAC has included new groups – mainly consisting of men - in its activities, and these groups include different unions,

political and social activists and new graduate lawyers. (For case studies conducted by WCLAC please refer to Appendix M)

Develop WCLAC's strategic plan (2016-2020), budget and annual work plans and administrative reports

A diverse set of workshops were carried out with each unit separately, with all of the staff members, and with the members of WCLAC's General Assembly and the Board of Directors. The results of these workshops were analyzed and strategic objectives and goals were developed. The 2016-2020 strategic plan adopted an interactive Theory of Change which brought in new stakeholders. These stakeholders include unions, political parties, and male community members. This new step will enable WCLAC to reach more men in local communities and thus involve them in increasing the protection of women. Strategic Plans for 2016-2020 was shared with WCLAC partners for discussion, review of its theory of change and strategic interventions. Further, the strategy was presented and thoroughly discussed with WCLAC's Board of Directors who approved, which gave staff the opportunity to work on the 2016 action plan.

During 2015, there were 3 meetings with the General Assembly, and WCLAC's Board of Directors convened 22 times. The 2014 Financial Reports have been prepared, and the audited financial statements have been issued and approved by WCLAC's Board of Directors and the General Authority, and distributed to all of the donors. Based on the proposal of the new strategic plan for 2016-2020, the budget was prepared for 2016-2020 and was approved by the Board of Directors, in addition to the finalization and approval of the strategic plan for 2016-2020.

Hold meetings for the Board of Directors

During 2015, the Board of Directors held 22 meetings during which they approved the WCLAC's annual financial and narrative reports for the year 2014, in addition to approving the audited financial statement for the year which ended on December 31, 2014. The Board of Directors was involved in the strategic planning process, reviewed and approved the 2016-2020 strategic plan and budget. They also interviewed and appointed the new General Director of WCLAC Ms. Randa Siniora.

3.3 Improve WCLAC's financial sustainability:

3.3.1 Maintain a diversity of funding resources:

WCLAC's external relations department keeps partners and donors informed of its work through mailing lists, bulletins, success stories and general reporting. The unit produces tailored reports on specific projects to inform the project orientated donors of the project's process and outcomes. Over the reporting period, 2 general reports and 31 special reports were prepared. Additionally, 7 success stories and 2 case-studies from the 2015 programmes were prepared and disseminated to donors. Partners and donors are also regularly accompanied on field visits to programme sites to enable them to see the work WCLAC carries out. Feedback from the donors remains very positive, and WCLAC continues to respond well to new requirements, delivering high quality reports to deadline.

3.3.1.2 Develop and diversify relations with new donors

In response to the challenges presented by the funding crisis, WCLAC has diversified its sources of funding at the local, regional and international level. In particular the funding trend for special projects challenges sustainability, and WCLAC has taken measures to limit the impact of this by trying to submit proposals that include core costs and current staff, although this remains an obstacle. In spite of these challenges, WCLAC has successfully developed new funding opportunities and is currently exploring new areas such as crowd-funding and Arab funding. During 2015, WCLAC's funders numbered 14.



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