





WCLAC Semiannual Report

2015

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*“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
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (UN)
GBV	Gender-based violence
HR/IHL	Human rights/International humanitarian law
ICHR	Independent Commission for Human Rights
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PNGO	Palestinian NGO Network
PPO	Public Prosecution Office
UPWC	Union of Palestinian Women's Committees
VAW	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 – 30 June 2015

Date of last report: 31 January 2015

Date of this report: 30 June 2015

### Political Brief

#### Overview

The first half of 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. One year on from "Operation Protective Edge" in the besieged Gaza strip, which took the lives of 2,205 Palestinians, including 283 women<sup>1</sup>, 700-800 Palestinian women "war widows" have become heads of their households in Gaza<sup>2</sup>. 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. To date this year, 230 Palestinian owned structures have been demolished in the West Bank plus 34 in East Jerusalem<sup>3</sup>. 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 Law<sup>4</sup>. Particularly vulnerable to forced relocations are the Bedouin community, over 7,000 of whom Israel plans to relocate in central West Bank<sup>5</sup>. On 7 May the

<sup>1</sup> Figures as of OCHA data on 15 October, 2014

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

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc02june-08june.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> 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>, accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>5</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Monthly Report April 2015 [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_monitor\\_2014\\_05\\_29\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_05_29_english.pdf), accessed 30 June 2015

Israeli government announced plans to build 900 settler homes in the Ramat Shlomo settlement neighbourhood of annexed East Jerusalem<sup>6</sup>. The first half of 2015 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 5<sup>7</sup>. As of March this year, there were reportedly 412 Palestinians held under administrative detention orders – more than double the 181 held at the same time last year<sup>8</sup>.

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."<sup>9</sup> 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 Israel 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"<sup>10</sup>. 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.

#### *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 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.<sup>11</sup>

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 29 June 2015 the number of Palestinian fatalities at the hands of Israeli forces in the West Bank stood at 13 in the first half

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<sup>6</sup> 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>, accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>7</sup> UNOCHA, Press briefing note on Israel <http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/UN%20OCHR%20on%20Admin%20detention.pdf>, accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>8</sup> UNOCHA, Press briefing notes on Israel, 10 April 2015 [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_monitor\\_2014\\_05\\_29\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_05_29_english.pdf), accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>9</sup> 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>, accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>10</sup> 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](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), accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>11</sup> As denoted in the ground-breaking UNDP report on human security, 'UNDP Human Development Report', published in 1994.

of 2015, while the number of Palestinians injured by Israeli forces stands at 971.<sup>12</sup> Soldier and settler related violence remains an on-going threat to the health of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank including Area C and East Jerusalem. Over the period 3-9 March 2015, six Israeli settler attacks were recorded, one of which led to the physical assault and injury of a 15-year-old-girl in Hebron. So far this year 93 cases of settler violence have been recorded, more than a third of which led to Palestinian casualties.

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 damage. 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 food and farming instruments across the border, 1.3 million of Gaza's 1.8 million residents now face food insecurities or are vulnerable to them. Moreover, with almost no access to clean water, agricultural sites devastated by military action and fishermen regularly fired at by Israeli naval ships in violation of the ceasefire<sup>13</sup>, 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-term<sup>14</sup>.

#### *Home Demolitions, forced relocation and settlement expansions*

To date this year, 230 Palestinian owned structures have been demolished in the West Bank plus 34 in East Jerusalem, and in one week alone (02-08 June) 29 Palestinians including 17 children and 7 women were displaced when 28 structures in Area C and East Jerusalem of the West Bank were demolished by

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<sup>12</sup> UNOCHA Protection of Civilians, <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc09june-15june.aspx>, accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>13</sup> Reuters, Israel fires at Gaza boats, kills Palestinian hospital officials, 7 March 2015 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/07/us-israel-palestinians-idUSKBNOM30HP20150307>, accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>14</sup> 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](http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/oPt_full_study_final.pdf),

Israeli authorities<sup>15</sup>. 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 Law<sup>16</sup>. House demolitions have a debilitating effect on Palestinian women, pushing them and their families into abject poverty and exposing family members to significant psychological and physical harm. Traditionally bear the primary responsibility for the physical and emotional care of children, elders, and others who need it.

In April 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 Hebron<sup>17</sup>. The residents strongly oppose these plans and have requested protection and assistance in their current location<sup>18</sup>. 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. On 5 May, 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 170 residents<sup>19</sup>. 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 for<sup>20</sup>. At the beginning of February a new illegal settlement was 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 land<sup>21</sup>. On 7 May the Israeli government announced plans to build 900 settler homes in the Ramat Shlomo settlement neighbourhood of annexed East Jerusalem<sup>22</sup>. 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.

#### *Arrest raids and home demolitions: effect on Palestinian women and families*

In January 400 Palestinians were placed under administrative detention by the Israeli authorities, including 57 minors and 18 women<sup>23</sup>. 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-

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<sup>15</sup> UNOCHA Protection of civilians <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc02june-08june.aspx>, accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>16</sup> 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>, accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>17</sup> 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](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_communities_jerusalem_factsheet_september_2014_english.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Monthly Report April 2015

[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_monitor\\_2014\\_05\\_29\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_05_29_english.pdf), accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>19</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Monthly Report April 2015

[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_monitor\\_2014\\_05\\_29\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_05_29_english.pdf), accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>20</sup> Hannah Rought-Brooks, Salwa Duaibis, Soraida Hussein, 'Palestinian Women: Caught in the Cross-Fire Between Occupation and Patriarchy' (2010) *Feminist Formations*. 22(3) 139

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=759213>

<sup>22</sup> 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>, accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>23</sup> Ma'an News Agency, "Group: 13 Palestinians being detained by Israel every day", 7 February 2015 <http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=759303>, accessed 30 June 2015



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 permit<sup>24</sup>.

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 February<sup>25</sup>. 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: Rya 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 in<sup>26</sup>. 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 six months 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 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)<sup>27</sup>. 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 2013<sup>28</sup>. In mid-January Malak al-Khatib, aged 14, became the youngest Palestinian girl to be jailed in an Israeli prison for throwing stones and being in possession of a knife<sup>29</sup>. She was detained for six weeks. As of 10 June, there are reportedly 18 female, 250 child and 1,500 sick detainees among over 7,000 Palestinians being held in 17 Israeli prisons and detention camps<sup>30</sup>. In March 2015 Head of the Palestinian Prisoners Society’s legal unit, Jawad Boulos, said that 33 minors are serving actual imprisonment sentences for different periods of time<sup>31</sup>. 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 jeep<sup>32</sup>. She spent seven months in Israeli detention.

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<sup>24</sup> 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>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>25</sup> 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>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>26</sup> 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>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>27</sup> UNOCHA, Israel briefing notes <http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/UN%20OCHR%20on%20Admin%20detention.pdf>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>28</sup> IMEMC News, “Elderly Palestinian Woman Sentenced to Eleven Months in Prison”, 17 June 2015, <http://www.imemc.org/article/71967>, accessed 2 July 2015

<sup>29</sup> 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>, accessed 2 July 2015

<sup>30</sup> PressTV, “Israeli troops kill young Palestinian in West Bank”, 10 June 2015 <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/06/10/415169/Israeli-soldiers-Palestinian-Jenin-West-Bank>, accessed 2 July 2015

<sup>31</sup> Wafa “Israeli Military Court Issues Imprisonment Sentences against Two Minors”, 29 June 2015 <http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=28758>, accessed 2 July 2015

<sup>32</sup> Addameer, “Violations continue against Palestinian Women and Girls on International Women’s Day” <http://www.addameer.org/etemplate.php?id=747>, accessed 30 June 2015



### *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" last summer, overhaul Palestinian political institutions or set up elections pledged by the end of this year<sup>33</sup>. 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.

Regarding the on-going Israeli occupation, indirect talks between Hamas and Israel are confirmed to have started, with the purpose of calming tensions in the area<sup>34</sup>. While there is unlikely to be any immediate result of these 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 Israel 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"<sup>35</sup>. 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 crimes<sup>36</sup>. The submission followed the release of a UN human rights council report on 22 June 2015 which Israeli and Palestinian factions of multiple potential violations of international law including suspected war crimes<sup>37</sup>.

One positive political development concerning Palestinian women was the Palestinian Parliament approving a national framework to implement UNSCR 1325 in Palestine<sup>38</sup>, 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. One 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 officials agreed to release on 29 June 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 incarceration<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Haaretz, Palestinian unity government to dissolve itself in coming days, Abbas says, June 16 2015 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.661522>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>34</sup> Jerusalem Post, "Hamas leader confirms rumors of indirect talks with Israel", 28 June 2015, <http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Hamas-leader-confirms-rumors-of-indirect-talks-with-Israel-407410>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>35</sup> 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](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), accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>36</sup> 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>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>37</sup> 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>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>38</sup> MIFTAH, "National Coalition for Implementing UNSCR 1325", 5 March 2015 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.661522>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>39</sup> 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](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/30/world/middleeast/worried-that-fasting-palestinian-prisoner-could-die-israel-releases-him.html?_r=0), accessed 2 July 2015

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 sprayed<sup>40</sup>. A lack of cooperation from Israel also led to the cancellation of the intended visit to WCLAC by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Ms. Rashida Manjoo, who had been intending to visit the region from 19-29 January 2015<sup>41</sup>. Manal Tamimi, a WCLAC field worker, was shot in the leg by Israeli forces during a peaceful demonstration<sup>42</sup>. 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,<sup>43</sup> as well as normalizing and institutionalising gender equality and women's rights, is perpetually compromised by the prolonged Israeli occupation.

### *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 GDP<sup>44</sup>. 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 leaves<sup>45</sup>, 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 media<sup>46</sup>. 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 Hebron<sup>47</sup>. 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 2008-2014<sup>48</sup>.

### *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.

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<sup>40</sup> 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>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>41</sup> 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>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>42</sup> WCLAC, "WCLAC field researcher shot during weekly demonstration", 7 April 2015 <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1490>, accessed 30 June 2015

<sup>43</sup> 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).

<sup>44</sup> World Bank 2015 Gaza Situation Report 94, [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Gaza%20Situation%20Report%2094%20\\_%20UNRWA.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Gaza%20Situation%20Report%2094%20_%20UNRWA.pdf), accessed 29 June 2015

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2015/05/18/716284.html>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.alhadath.ps/article.php?id=1017879y16873593Y1017879>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.raya.ps/ar/news/904751.html>

<sup>48</sup> UNOCHA 2015 Strategic Response Plan OPT [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/srp\\_2015.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/srp_2015.pdf), accessed 29 June 2015

## Highlights

### WCLAC's co-founder and General Director Maha Abu-Dayyeh passes 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.

### Successful preparation of WCLAC's 2016-2020 strategic plan

In the first half of 2015 WCLAC successfully worked on developing the first draft of 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 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. 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. 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 will now be presented to the board of directors for their approval.

### Family Protection Against Violence Law

WCLAC continues its advocacy work for drafting and ratification of the draft Family Protection from Violence law. After many years of work by WCLAC and other key service providers The Family Protection from Violence law was provisionally accepted by the Cabinet in 2013, representing a major achievement and huge milestone for WCLAC. In 2014 work on the draft law gained ground with the formation of a governmental drafting committee, comprising of members from a range of different bodies working in the field, to hold a final review process and finalize the law. Meetings were held throughout 2014 on a bi-monthly basis to facilitate the final drafting of the law, and significant progress was made for the passage of the draft legislation. During the first half of 2015 this process has continued satisfactorily, and drafting is now in the final stages before it is put before the Cabinet for formal ratification. WCLAC is part of the drafting committee that has been working on drafting the Family Protection Against Violence Law, and the committee submitted the final draft version to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). The MOJ sent it to the Cabinet of Ministers, which also sent it to all the other ministries for final comments and approval. If the law is passed, then this will be the first time that there is a law that deals with violence against women in the private sphere, and handle specific issues within a family. This law is designed to be a preventative law, which provides protection procedures for women and empower them to seek support from the Family Protection Unit in the Police department.

### WCLAC lodges two UN submissions and publishes a new report 'Jerusalem: A City on Edge'

WCLAC continues to provide vital case study and testimony reports at an international level, which are helping to solidify evidence of human rights violations against Palestinian women committed by Israel. During the first half of 2015, WCLAC successfully submitted two reports to the UN. The [first submission](#) was made in January 2015 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. As a result of this submission WCLAC was referenced in the Commission's final report, which was released in June of this year.

The [second submission](#) was made in June 2015 to 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 Jerusalem. The submission is supported by 100 testimonies collected from women in 34 locations who experienced raids between March 2014 and June 2015 and details the devastating impact that repeated night raids have on affected communities. WCLAC has requested the Special Rapporteurs to independently assess these claims and issue a public statement with their conclusions. A new report by WCLAC – [Jerusalem: A City on Edge](#) – points to almost insurmountable bureaucratic hurdles placed in the way of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem to move freely, marry who they wish and dream of a safe and secure future. At the same time these residents see before their eyes different standards being applied to Israeli settlers living next door in violation of international law.

The report graphically describes, through the voices of women, a community deliberately and systematically placed under enormous physical and psychological pressure with the apparent intention of making not only day-to-day life unbearable, but destroying any hope in a brighter future.

This is the second in a series of reports under the Project "Protect the Rights and Improve the Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in East Jerusalem", funded by the European Union and co-financed by Oxfam Novib. The first being: Jerusalem: A City Divided, published in September 2014, which focused on some of the historical aspects of the conflict in relation to Jerusalem.

### Reestablishment of the Protection Shelters' Steering Committee

WCLAC has successfully reactivated the Protection Shelter's Steering Committee, comprising the three shelters 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.

Following the last Government change WCLAC froze its work with the Ministry of Social Affairs, fearing it would have to re-do all its work. With the latest reshuffle the Minister has stayed the same but has also been assigned as Minister of Agriculture, making it extremely hard to schedule meetings with him owing to his busy schedule. In the latest unity government the Minister of Social Affairs has also been assigned duties in Gaza. In the past 6 months, he has spent more than a month in Gaza leading to difficulties in arranging meetings. So far WCLAC have met with him twice and have been able to agree on a MOU draft. WCLAC, in partnership with the Jericho governorate, organized a meeting on 24 March for all the involved parties to discuss the reestablishment of the committee and focus on its role and involvement in the shelters' developments and activities. The Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Police Department, and the Family Protection Unit all participating in the meeting. They discussed the anticipated work of the committee in monitoring and evaluating the shelters and carrying out needs based assessment.

A second meeting was held on 8 June, with the participation of the previously mentioned parties, and a draft of the Memorandum of Understanding between the three shelters and the Ministry of Social Affairs was successfully written up. 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. A third meeting is scheduled for 18 August. According to WCLAC's proposal, the official Memorandum of Understanding will be signed in November once five meetings have been completed. In addition to the meetings, 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.

#### Building the capacity of partner grassroots organizations:

For the first time WCLAC has successfully empowered one partner grassroots organization to train another. WCLAC has built the capacity of partner grassroots organizations to allow them to empower and build the capacity of other organizations, thus strengthening and expanding the reach and effectiveness of people involved with women's rights.

WCLAC trained Al-Najdah Charity and as a result for the first time they have been empowered to conduct their own training and train other grassroots organizations. For the first time, two legal and social counselors from Al-Najdah Charity, who WCLAC has been training since 2007, conducted a training workshop independently and built the capacity of the new staff members in the Tubas Charitable Society (TCS), another grassroots organization which has partnered with WCLAC since 2011. Following thorough training from WCLAC, offering them detailed guidance on how to train the staff at Tubas, the Al-Najdah counselors held a 5 day training workshop with the new staff at TCS about violence against women, and

how to provide services, counselling, and representing women in courts. They were able to use the training they have received from WCLAC, in addition to their first hand experiences from many field trips. Following the one month training, Al-Najdah and the new staff at Tubas shared their satisfaction with WCLAC, and WCLAC continues to offer them guidance and support. By doing so, WCLAC has empowered the staff of Al-Najdah and helped them advance and use their experience and helped in the creation of more partnerships and networks between grassroots organizations.

#### 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. In the past six months, 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. Further, arranging meetings with the Minister of Justice has not been possible because he is located in the Gaza Strip and while appointments have been arranged with his office, obtaining the permit to visit Gaza has not been very successful.

**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 was 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 favour 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 continues to deter them from seeking their legal rights in the first place.

**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:**

***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 of 906 women: 225 received long-term legal and social counselling; among them, 12 received counselling only and 29 received legal aid only, however the majority – 184 – received both legal and social services. 213 (29+184) received in-courts representation; 165 had one-off legal consultations through the helpline and helpdesk, 45 of 165 were referred to WCLAC to receive long-term legal aid (included in the 184), so a total of 120 women received one-time legal consultations only; 150 had one-time joint socio-legal consultation, 8 of 150 were referred to WCLAC to receive long-term legal and social aid (included in the 184), so a total of 142 received one-time legal and social consultations only; 17 women were hosted at WCLAC's emergency shelter; and 11 women and their families were helped through family counselling. In addition to the 568 women, WCLAC also provided 390 women with counselling via the emergency helpline; and 1 woman received e-counselling. All the women who decide to take cases to court receive joint socio-legal counselling as part of a holistic intervention to empower women victims of violence and safeguard their rights.

A total of 213 women filed cases in courts over the reporting period, and the number of legal cases is 256. 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 256 cases, there are 41 cases which have remained in the court process since 2014, comprising a total of 297 separate cases. 100% of the cases were referred to WCLAC by partners, and all of the cases have received case conferences. So far this year WCLAC obtained 73 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, 33 out-of-court settlements were reached through out-of-court settlements or mediation facilitated by WCLAC's team of lawyers and social workers. This leaves 191 legal files to be worked on during the second half of the year.

WCLAC succeeded in supporting 47% of women recipients of legal and social aid in claiming their rights and 85% of WCLAC's clients reported an improved understanding of their rights. The helpline was re-advertised in 2015, from mid-May until mid-June to expand the number of recipients and inform the



public about it. Another 35 women have received legal consultation through the help desk at the courts by our lawyers. This service remains an effective framework for the mediation of cases by WCLAC's social workers, whereby numerous cases have been resolved without the need for a court case. Additionally, 35 social consultations have been provided, where WCLAC's specialists offered guidance and advice, and sought to bridge 28 files between the parties in an attempt to solve the problems that women suffer from.

#### ***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 socio-legal aid to 150 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 legal consultations to 165 women. 45 of these women came to WCLAC's office following these one-time consultations, so that 25% 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, through 3 daily news flashes for the period of the whole month of June. Unfortunately, WCLAC did not provide legal and social counselling through its website and the main reason behind this is societal preferences since telephone calls are favoured over email as a means of communication largely in the OPT. Another reason can be attributed to women not knowing about this tool, despite the advertisement that was aired on television. It seems that the choice of the channel was not the most appropriate.

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

In the first six months of the year, WCLAC was able to assist 40 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. In an effort to provide women with reliable information, in an easy-to-understand manner, WCLAC distributed 214 copies of the alimony manual, and 225 of the custody manual.

WCLAC experienced a spike in demand for such 'in-court' legal aid, providing 127 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*. 22 sessions were held to provide 22 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 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 390 calls were received, representing a significant increase on the last semester, 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 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.

		Bethlehem	Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Type of service	Legal and social	20	50	88	26	184
	Legal	2	7	7	13	29
	Social	0	10	0	2	12
	Total	22	67	95	41	225

		Bethlehem	Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Legal / Social Case	Marital obedience	0	2	1	0	3
	Custody & visits	3	6	8	5	22
	<i>Nafaka</i> (alimony) incl. rent	22	28	70	15	127
	<i>Mahr</i> (dowry)	2	12	6	0	20
	Divorce	10	16	24	11	61
	Family/Marital conflict	3	7	6	4	20
	Rights issues	0	1	1	0	2
	Criminal cases	0	1	1	0	2
	Procedural cases	1	3	3	0	7
	Physical violence	4	10	18	9	41
	Sexual violence	0	2	1	0	3
	Psychological violence	1	16	33	6	56
	Economic violence	2	35	30	3	70

		Bethlehem	Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Level of education	Unknown	0	1	1	1	3
	No formal education	0	0	1	0	1
	Primary school	5	17	20	13	55
	Secondary school	13	29	43	20	105
	Higher education	4	20	30	7	61
	University					
		Bethlehem	Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Age	37 and over	7	24	20	11	62
	18 - 36	12	40	69	28	149
	18 and under	3	3	6	2	14
		Bethlehem	Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Marital status	Abandoned	1	3	3	3	10
	Widowed	0	4	2	1	7
	Divorced	4	13	10	6	33
	Separated	1	2	1	1	5

	Married	2	12	7	10	31
	Engaged	0	1	1	1	3
	Single	2	1	1	2	6
	Sharia contract	2	1	8	1	12
	<i>Urfi</i> <sup>[1]</sup> contract	0	0	0	0	0
	Temporarily separated	10	30	62	16	118

		Bethlehem	Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Source of Referral	Courts	8	30	58	4	100
	Police	0	4	9	0	13
	District councils	3	4	3	0	10
	MoSA	1	11	4	5	21
	Other institutions	3	8	12	11	34
	Individual	0	1	2	0	3
	Lawyers	3	2	0	8	13
	Other	4	7	7	13	31

		Bethlehem	Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Type of work	Housewife	6	40	66	12	124
	Student	1	5	10	2	18
	Unemployed	2	2	9	15	28
	Private, government or civil society sector	10	12	7	10	39
	Informal work	3	8	3	2	16

<sup>[1]</sup> An *Urfi* marriage is an informal marriage contract, not registered with the state authorities

Table 5. Perpetrator						
		Bethlehem	Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Perpetrator	Immediate Family	0	0	0	1	1
	Ex-husband	6	14	10	6	36
	Husband's family	0	4	5	0	9
	Husband	17	36	74	32	159
	Fiancé	0	4	6	2	12
	Other relatives	0	9	0	0	9

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

In the first half of 2015, the Palestinian Counselling Centre (PCC) was contracted to conduct supervision of the entire Service Unit. On 18/4, 30/5 and 13/6 WCLAC and 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, 3 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.

WCLAC has held 2 meetings with partner organisations including MoSA and local authorities across the West Bank in order to exchange experiences of best practices to protect women survivors. In March, WCLAC's Service Unit and shelter arranged a workshop in the governorate of Jericho that hosts the three shelters with the participation of MoSA offices in the local district council, the Police Family Protection Unit and the deputy of MoSA. During this workshop it was decided that 3 meetings will be held in order to specify the responsibilities of MoSA regarding the referral mechanisms used to provide protection to women victims of violence in accordance with the national referral system (Takamol). The involved parties agreed that there needs to be a clearer and unified understanding about the system among the different service providers, and there needs to be unified procedures when providing protection to women. They also agreed to reinforce the shelters' committee and create a MoU to define the roles and responsibilities of all the involved bodies.

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. In mid-June the first

meeting of 3 with the emergency shelters and MoSA was held to develop an MOU between the 3 shelters in the West Bank under the supervision of MoSA.

### **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 reporting period, WCLAC provided emergency protection to 17 women from all over the West Bank between the ages of 18-36 whose lives were at risk. The majority of these women were suffering from family violence and being threatened with murder. Emergency shelter clients typically stay for up to one month according to Emergency Shelter procedures. The emergency shelter committee, made up of WCLAC, MoSA, the Family Protection Unit at the Police Department and the governorate, decided to refer three 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 case conference for the client to define the intervention plan. 10 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. 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. One of the biggest challenges was the opposition of women to their placement in the shelter.

Since the beginning of the year 22 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.

### **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 zone<sup>49</sup>***

Since the beginning of 2015, WCLAC organized awareness-raising activities, constituting 84 hours and targeting 100 women, in areas of the West Bank with difficult political, social and geographical circumstances; Beit Duqqa, Thubra, Khirbet Beit Sakaria, and Suwreef.

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

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<sup>49</sup> 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.

updated knowledge of service providers available to protect them. (*Kindly see appendix J page 12; Success story #2*)

WCLAC conducted awareness-raising meetings in four different areas in the southern West Bank governorate of Hebron: Old City of Hebron (H2)<sup>50</sup>, 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 faces 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.

### **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 4 awareness-raising workshops about women issues at Bet Jala Vocational College, with an average of 22 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.

WCLAC held 2 awareness-raising workshops on Women's rights in 2 Palestinian universities, Birzeit University and Istiqlal University, titled "Women Rights are Human Rights". These workshops targeted 46 students, and discussed the following: Introduction to Gender, Palestinian Women and the Criminal Law, Palestinian Women and the Personal Status Law, Violence Against Women, and a specific focus on CEDAW. The workshops were very successful, as there was enthusiastic participation and the number of participants was higher than expected.

#### ***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.

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<sup>50</sup> Under full Israeli control



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. *(Kindly see appendix J page 13; Success story #3.)*

### **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 the first half of 2015, WCLAC conducted several follow-up meetings with grassroots organisations. 6 programmatic/software follow-up meetings have convened, 3 of which were carried out with 5 participants from the staff and management team of Al-Najdah, and another 3 were carried out with 7 participants from the staff and management team of TCS. Also 12 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 half of 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. 6 specialized supervision sessions were offered, constituting 18 hours: 3 collective sessions, 1 social supervision session, 2 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, 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 marginalised areas.

Al-Najdah society provided legal and social guidance to 35 women in need and offered 13 awareness-raising meetings, targeting 213 participants, 20 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 67 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 19 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 277 participants (21 males), namely members of administrative bodies, teachers, students and housewives.

WCLAC has been working on improving the capacity of grassroots organisations 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 8<sup>th</sup> of March.

***Build the capacity of partner organisations in organizing advocacy campaigns for women's issues***

By conducting a workshop, WCLAC trained the grassroots organizations in advocacy mechanisms and ways to spread awareness regarding violence against women. The workshop lasted 7 days, with the participation of 23 women. Following the workshop WCLAC conducted an evaluation through pre and post questionnaires, which revealed a significant improvement in the women's knowledge and expertise on the issue.

**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***

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**

**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***

In the first half of 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, and during this time of the year, WCLAC is in its observation and documentation stage and arranging to

prepare an Analysis Report for the year 2014/2015. As of June 30, there have been 4 femicide cases in Gaza and 4 in the West Bank (2 in Gaza and 4 in the West Bank have been documented, and 2 in Gaza are currently under investigation). There has been one sexual assault case in the city of Qalqilya, and another in Jerusalem's suburbs. As a result of this intolerable reality, 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 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. Also, the observation and documentation process deals with collecting and analyzing very sensitive information, which can ultimately lead to the death of the victim.

WCLAC held a meeting with 7 of its West Bank lawyers and trained them on ways to observe the court hearings in order to understand the problems within the system and ways to improve it. WCLAC has contacted the Public Prosecution Office to ask for permission to allow WCLAC's lawyers to have access to case and court files and collect data, however up until now WCLAC hasn't received a response, and is waiting for official correspondence.

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

The Social Security Law draft was reviewed, and resource material and data was collected, focusing on women rights. This will help WCLAC in the second half of 2015, when it begins to prepare the special questionnaire to be used while conducting separate interviews and documenting women's experiences in dealing with the Social Security Law. WCLAC is focusing on preparing for the interviews and field visits that are scheduled to occur in the second half of the year. WCLAC is preparing a survey which focuses on collecting the necessary information available in cases of violations of women's rights, in order to present them to the involved decision makers and 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. 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. Another meeting is set to occur in the second part of 2015. 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.

### **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 Labor ministry 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. (*Kindly see appendix J page 15; Case study #1.*)

### ***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 will continue 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.

## **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 UN 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 organisations 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 Organisations Network, under the title 'National Challenges and the Role of Civil Work'. Moreover, WCLAC was directly involved in the National Committee<sup>51</sup> 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

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<sup>51</sup> 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.

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 also participated in a workshop on 04/06/2015 organized to discuss the draft of the Family Protection from Violence Law.

WCLAC is an active member in the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, and has participated in the periodic meetings held this year in February, which discussed accountability and liability, and based on the results, WCLAC is going to adopt its working procedures of the rest of 2015 and 2016.

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 5 media sources share WCLAC's news by broadcasting the update exactly in the same form WCLAC prepares it. WCLAC has been participating in a variety of activities prepared by media institutions or WCLAC partner organisations. 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. The publishing of materials will take place in the second part of the year.

Since 2010, WCLAC's website has received 482661 hits, and the section with women's stories has recently been updated. There have been 3572 likes on WCLAC's Facebook page, which is constantly being updated. WCLAC's YouTube page has also been updated and new materials have been uploaded, and 100 new members have been added to WCLAC's electronic mailing list.

## **2.3 Empower youth volunteer networks to publicise 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 12 meetings, 42 hours, with the volunteer groups (60 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. (Kindly see appendix J page 14; Success story #5.)

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

WCLAC supported the volunteers in creating new partnerships with local organisations 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 organisations, and shedding a light on the issue of having insufficient recourses and services available to women. The local organisations were welcoming and offered the volunteers the space to discuss their concerns. Throughout these partnerships, events have been organized for Women's Day. The volunteers organized a workshop in Hebron to handle issues related to experiences in working as a volunteer; another workshop was conducted in Bethlehem which discussed femicide. New volunteers with diverse backgrounds and experiences have been accepted into WCLAC's volunteer program, 21 of whom are from Nablus and 23 from Qalqilya. 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.

**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***

A total of 95 testimonies were collected from women living under occupation in East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The testimonies cover a number of issues including home demolitions, denial of family rights, settler and soldier violence, night raids and movement restriction. The testimonies were divided as follows: 65 from the West Bank, 9 from Gaza and 21 from East Jerusalem. A total of 29 testimonies were collected in January, 9 in February, 20 in March, 12 in April, 10 in May and 15 in June.

***Conduct advocacy activities using innovative tools***

A total of 60 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 6 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 7 statements were issued during the first six months of 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 researcher 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" in addition to 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 May of this year the International Advocacy team produced a new report entitled [Jerusalem: A City on Edge](#). 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. Click [here](#) for a full text of the report.

Between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2015, 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 organized 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 the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> 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. *(Kindly see appendix J page 12; Success story #1.)*

Over this reporting period a total of 34 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 husbands. 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.

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. Click [here](#) for the full text of the submission.

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



Jerusalem. The submission details the devastating impact that repeated night raids have on affected communities and is supported by 100 testimonies collected from women in 34 locations who experienced raids in 2014 and 2015. 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 1967.

In March, WCLAC took part in the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC accredited NGOs from all regions of the world attended the session. The main focus was on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including current challenges that affect its implementation and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission undertook a review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Participating in the session provided an opportunity for WCLAC to network with women from around the world and to address the participants and raise their awareness about the situation of women in Palestine.

#### ***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, which graphically describe 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 the 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***

Ongoing 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.

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.

##### ***Develop a mentoring programme to train young Palestinian advocates***

WCLAC's field work coordinator was selected for intensive training to enable her to conduct advocacy activities both locally and abroad. In addition two young women working at Birzeit University were contacted. They both expressed desire and willingness to be trained.

Intensive training for the field work coordinator took place during this reporting period. The main objective was to prepare her to take part in an advocacy trip abroad. Field work coordinator took part in an advocacy trip to The Netherlands and Switzerland. She successfully intervened in the discussions and

supported her arguments with moving human stories. She proved to be an excellent asset to the team.

### **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***

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. 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 current strategic plan which started in September 2014- May 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.

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

A diverse set of workshops was 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.

During the first half of 2015, there was one meeting with the General Assembly, and WCLAC's Board of Directors convened 10 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, a draft of the budget was prepared for 2016-2020 by the Department of Finance and heads of units, and is now pending to be presented and approved by the Board of Directors.

#### ***Hold meetings for the Board of Directors***

During this reporting period, the Board of Directors 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 also involved in the strategic planning process. It convened

### **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, 7 general reports and 6 special reports were prepared. Additionally, 9 success stories from the 2014 and 4 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. As of June 30 2015, WCLAC's funders numbered 14.



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