



تلارشاد القانوني والاجتماعي

مركز المرأة

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

WCLAC Annual Report

2018

Annual Report 2018

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Part I. Summary Report

Political Brief

The Israeli control of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPT) has resulted in an increased and more strategized sphere of institutionalized discrimination, repression and violence. This has added another layer of oppression to those already existing within a patriarchal society. Palestinian women regularly face violence, threats, intimidation, restriction on movement, and discrimination as a result of Israeli policies that violate international humanitarian and human rights law, these policies include property destruction, demolition, and the lack of adequate housing; aggression and targeting of civilians; expansion of settlements and settler violence; forcible eviction of Palestinians from occupied Jerusalem, and collective punishment as a tool in forcible transfer; and targeting women human rights defenders, women journalists and activists.

The annexation of Palestinian territory through the development of Israeli settlements has continued throughout 2018. The demolition of Bedouin village Khan al-Ahmar is the latest example of arbitrary legislative action being taken in Israel's courts, which directly affects Palestinians in the West Bank. Unfortunately, on September 5th, the Israeli Supreme Court denied an appeal against the demolition of the Palestinian community, and ordered its removal and displacement. The first ruling was made in May this year, in which it granted the Israeli occupation's military green light for demolishing the village¹. Forced transfers, evictions, arbitrary displacement, demolitions and confiscations of homes instigated by the Israeli authorities has only increased.

WCLAC developed a policy paper highlighting the violations of International Humanitarian Law and CEDAW, by the Israeli occupation in Khan Al-Ahmar village (where Israeli forces are implementing a forcible transfer in the form of the demolition of the Village of Khan al-Ahmar). The destruction of Khan al-Ahmar is one of many planned demolitions, in Area C², due to Israel's "E1" project which aims to connect settlements directly to East Jerusalem; where Bedouin communities have to be demolished to do the annexation. WCLAC analysed the case of Khan Al-Ahmar relying on international Human rights frameworks, and collecting women's voices from the village to document women's protection needs under occupation. Where on the 24th of September, WCLAC participated in the Human Rights Council 39th session on agenda item 7³, and delivered an oral statement⁴ in which it highlighted the gendered impact

¹ https://www.btselem.org/communities_facing_expulsion/khan_al_ahmar

² Areas Under full Israeli and Civil control

³ **Agenda Item 7** mandates that the UNHRC debate Israeli human rights abuses against the Palestinians during each of its *sessions*

⁴ Link to the oral statement: <http://webtv.un.org/search/item7-general-debate-29th-meeting-39th-regular-session-human-rights-council-5839313315001/?term=&lan=english&page=4#player>

of the Israeli occupation and focused on the Israeli occupation violations committed against Palestinian women who did not pose any imminent threat to the life of others during the return marches. There was international condemnation of the actions taken by Israeli forces, with outcry coming from the European Union calling on Israel to adhere to its international obligations. Further stating that, any action taken by the Israeli government toward the construction or expansion of settlements would constitute a violation of international law⁵. The international community was able to postpone the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar as a decision was taken by the Supreme Court in Israel to temporarily halt the imminent eradication of the Bedouin village. The Bedouin village's school also serves as a hub for more than 160 students from the surrounding area. The school was also directly targeted by Israeli forces as another form of punitive punishment.

Israel's practice of house demolitions and school demolitions are examples of how forcible transfer is inherently discriminatory. Israel uses zoning and planning laws that discriminatorily target non-Jews. Israel permits construction of buildings that benefit Jewish Israeli citizens, while denying building permits to non-Jews; in East Jerusalem for example, only five percent of Palestinian applications for building permits are granted with an average processing period of five to ten years, compared to building permits for Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem, which are approved at a rate of 90-100 percent.⁶The widespread adverse effects this has specifically on women is continuously documented by women's rights organizations such as WCLAC in collaboration with other domestic NGO's.

The Israeli government also opted to deduct \$300 million from the Palestinian Authorities budget.⁷ On the same day Palestinian Authority leaders condemned the action of Israel to withhold hundreds of millions of aid funds used for welfare payments to Palestinian prisoners and families.⁸

On the 3rd of July a mass women's protest in the Gaza Strip resulted in 234 Palestinians being wounded by Israeli live fire. The women's protest was the first since the March 30th protest for the Nakba protests or 'The Right of Return'.⁹ The continuous killings of innocent protestors in Gaza resulted in the admittance of a lack of oversight and for intervention from the International community. According to Amnesty International's campaign "Six Months on: Gaza's Great March of Return", over 150 Palestinians have been killed in the demonstrations since the start of the protests. At least 10,000 others have been injured, including 1,849 children, 424 women, 115 paramedics and 115 journalists. Of those injured, 5,814 were hit by live ammunition¹⁰.

⁵ <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestinians-fear-demolition-bedouin-village-khan-al-ahmar-imminent-1901355710>

⁶ Society of St. Yves, 'Housing Issues in Jerusalem' (2014) Society of St.

<http://www.saintyves.org/?MenuId=0&Lang=1&TemplateId=projects&catId=7&full=1&id=35>

⁷ <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/un-warns-us-funding-freeze-will-lead-cut-palestinian-refugee-projects-1095347149>

⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/pa-israel-freeze-prisoner-family-money-declaration-war-180703153140802.html>

⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/israeli-forces-wound-scores-women-gaza-rally-180703204015686.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2018/10/gaza-great-march-of-return/>

The Israeli law passed by the Knesset on the 23rd of July 2018 enshrined the status of Palestinians in Israel as second-class citizens.¹¹ The rise of ultranationalist ideals that seek to ensure Israeli state development at the cost of Palestinian lives has officially been institutionalized. The violations of human rights in the oPt aren't only related with the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian authority committed certain violations. For instance, there has been a very recent development in the Palestinian Authority discourse concerning freedom of speech in silencing opposition media and peaceful protest of local citizens. There has been a steady increase in opposition to press freedom since 2016 in the West Bank and Gaza specifically.

Commission on the Status of Women: Gendered Impact of Occupation on Women

Due to the escalated violence experienced in the Gaza territory healthcare facilities faced being pushed to domestic limits. The increased number of casualties experienced in 2018, due to live ammunition being used as a deterrent against Palestinian protesters, of who large percentages were women civil actors, in the form of health providers or paramedics such as Razzan al- Najjar. Razan al- Najjar was a 21 –year-old volunteer paramedic that had been renowned for her selfless medical aid and service to the injured Palestinian protestors in Gaza. Razan al-Najjar was shot by an Israeli sniper in the chest, while in the process of attempting to aid an injured Palestinian protestor that was close to the fortified Israeli fence. According to the ministry of health close to 8,000 Gazan protesters were admitted to hospital, with 3,900 wounded directly by Israeli live ammunition fire. The situation is further exacerbated, due to the inability for many of the wounded to obtain permits to exit Gaza in need of healthcare support that is not available in the region. Out of 93 applications only 24 were approved by the Israeli Authorities.¹² This is directly affected by the 11-year blockade by the Israeli authorities as well as the lack of support from the Palestinian Authority.

Therefore, WCLAC's submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the oPt in February of 2018 served to highlight the health rights issues that face Palestinian women, specifically in Gaza. The submission focused on the direct and indirect impact of the Israeli blockade on women's health right issues, including sexual and reproductive health rights.

The submission was part of a wider report conducted in partnership with Karama, focusing on three other key factors that continuously inhibit daily functions of women in the oPt: these were refugee women in the oPt, residency revocation & family reunification especially in Jerusalem, female prisoners and the impact of forceful detention and access to healthcare and medical negligence.

A study conducted by MIFTAH documented 500 Palestinian women refugees from the West Bank and Gaza, to detail the exact detrimental effects of the situation in Gaza, as well as the continued impact of the Israeli occupation on woman. 33% of interviewees suffered from psychological and physical abuse; 24% were displaced and had to live in shelters as a result; 21% said they had been exposed to beatings or tear gas at Israeli checkpoints, where 4% reported having to abort a child or gave birth at a checkpoint;

¹¹<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/23/netanyahu-israeli-apartheid-palestinians-nation-state-law>

¹² <http://english.pnn.ps/2018/06/21/un-experts-say-gaza-health-care-at-breaking-point/>

5% of refugee women or children were forced to drop out of school directly because of Israeli occupation.¹³

Residency revocation and family reunification continues to be a topic of serious detriment to Palestinian civil society at the hands of the Israeli occupation. The difficulty in obtaining permits, as well as long stay residency permits, creates an environment of uncertainty and hopelessness for Palestinian families. This disproportionately affects women. The arbitrary laws implemented by the Israeli occupying authorities forces women to struggle with the crippling effects of physical but also the mental abuse from being forced to leave their homes. Furthermore, the difficulty in not being able to reunify the family results in serious distress and hardships faced by families. This directly influences the children of the Palestinian families in multiple, detrimental ways.

A report from the Palestinian Chronicle from March 7th, 2018 stated that a minimum of 62 female Palestinian prisoners were being held in Israeli jails were under the age of 18.¹⁴ Furthermore, at the end of May 440 Palestinians which included 2 women and 3 minors were held in administrative detention in Israel.¹⁵ Treatment of female prisoners is evident by the lack of sufficient measures taken to ensure that all the inalienable rights are provided for in jails for Palestinian women. Moreover, the trauma that is experienced physically and psychologically by imprisoned women under Israeli forces has long lasting effects. The societal and occupational environment hampers the ability for the Palestinian women to express what occurred during their detention as well as be able to mentally come to terms and progress to reintegrate into society and assimilate and become active civil society members.

A major issue that faces women in Gaza that was outlined by WCLAC report is the women's access to healthcare. The issue is twofold in terms of the access to healthcare domestically in Gaza due to the infrastructural damage caused by the Israeli occupation and the lack of support from the PA. Furthermore, the ability for Israeli forces, surrounding Gaza to prevent importation of raw building materials, medical equipment and medical care necessities, needed to rebuild and maintain critical medical infrastructure. This results in a variety of issues directly halting the ability for aid providers to help the Gazan demographic. This further complicates the situation for women in Gaza.

Moreover, the harsh imposed reality on women at the hands of Israeli Authorities, where women are left to deal with severe medical issues alone and are rarely given the necessary treatment, which is compulsory under international law.¹⁶ The restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities in terms of admitting international humanitarian aid actors has consistently decreased according to the report submitted by WCLAC. Besides the increasing encroachment of Israeli checkpoints surrounding Gaza means that ambulances and patients are consistently prevented from being able to efficiently provide critical healthcare to those that need it most in a timely fashion. In addition to the inability for woman in Gaza

¹³<http://www.miftah.org/Publications/Books/MiftahRefugeeWomenStudy0418.pdf> available on in Arabic

¹⁴<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/israel-holding-62-palestinian-women-prisoners-including-6-minors/>

¹⁵https://www.btselem.org/administrative_detention/statistics

¹⁶ Article 11 of The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

due to the arbitrary permit restrictions for medical and support permits being denied by Israeli forces. The collection of factors the women of Gaza face puts them in a precarious position that has a serious impact on their physical and mental stability.

GBV against Jerusalemite women is a double-edged sword, with oppression coming from both Israeli violations and the patriarchal ideals in society. Unfortunately, Palestinian women living under occupation don't have full access to their rights due to the direct influence of Israeli jurisdiction on the lives of Palestinian women living in East Jerusalem, in combination with the patriarchal development of marriage rights in the West Bank. For instance, when West-Bank women marry Jerusalemites they face multiple obstacles concerning the implemented rulings in courts, children custody and residency permits. Thus when their husbands remarry or get divorced they are denied of their residency rights. As for Jerusalemite woman that resides with her husband outside the city of Jerusalem (under the jurisdiction of the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality¹⁷), but got divorced and wanted to return to live in Jerusalem, she will have no residency rights, no right to work nor social security rights. WCLAC has been dealing with such case scenarios in courts since its establishment and realized that the best interests and rights of children are not considered who face separation from one of their parents due to the multiple laws applied. In addition, female victims of domestic abuse might fear reporting in case their residency rights are revoked, or for those who do not have residency documents, as they fear being discovered by the authorities, and forcibly transferred away from their children. This leads to increased risk of domestic abuse against women in Jerusalem. Therefore, specifically in East Jerusalem men are provided with all the support and backing in terms of legal policy, which creates an institutionalized system of discrimination against women on the Palestinian side in combination with the laws of the Israeli occupying power discriminating against Palestinians overall. This leads us to admit that women are disproportionately at risk in East Jerusalem due to both domestic laws in the West Bank further complicated by the occupation of Israeli Authorities.¹⁸

The house arrest of minors is used as a method of punishment not just for the Palestinian minors, but also for the families for actions such as throwing stones or acting in a manner that is deemed provocative or dangerous according to the Israeli state. Israeli Military Order 1651¹⁹ establishes the age of 12 as the minimum age for criminal responsibility²⁰. Palestinian children are tried as adults at the age of 16 with a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment.²¹

House arrest (as well as detention prior to house arrest) constitutes a deprivation of liberty²² and may also amount to an unjustified restriction on the right to freedom of movement.²³ Moreover, the deprivation

¹⁷ <https://www.arij.org/atlas40/chapter1.5.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jq/fulltext/198348>

¹⁹ Article 186 of Military Order 1651, August 2015 Available at: http://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/article_186.pdf

²⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 1

²¹ UNICEF report 2013: Children In Israeli Military Detention, p. 8: Available at https://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF_oPt_Children_in_Israeli_Military_Detention_Observations_and_Recommendations_-_6_March_2013.pdf

²² UN Human Rights Committee, *Gorji-Dinka v. Cameroon* U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/83/D/1134/2002

²³ Article 12 ICCPR; *Fongum Gorji-Dinka v Cameroon* Communication no.1134/2002 (17 Mar.2005) [5.1]

of liberty of a minor must always be a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time.²⁴ Therefore, the action taken by the Israeli forces, placing children under house arrest also violates the human rights of family members, especially their mothers. Right to be free from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment:²⁵

The effect this has on families due to the fact that the parents especially mothers become the main policers/prison guards of their children resulting in a fractured inter family relationship directly imposed by the Israeli policy. According to Addameer's statistics, 5500 Palestinians are detained in Israeli prisons including 230 children 14 are under 16 years old, 54 women, around 480 administrative detainee, 19 journalists, 8 PLC member, 700 sick prisoners, and 27 prisoners before signing the Oslo Accords in 1993.²⁶ It highlighted that Jerusalemites were the most targeted in 2018 as it was recorded that there were around 1600 cases of arrests including 400 children and 60 women²⁷. It should be mentioned that women are disproportionately affected by imprisonment due to the fact that mothers in the Palestinian society are usually the most present person pertaining to being at the family residence. Women are effectively forced to become prison guards for their children, causing psychological pressure, and constant worry about them leaving the house; it further places emotional strain on their relationships. This also isolates them socially from their community. The burden is even greater for women who are single parents or whose husbands are handicapped or otherwise unable to work.

The punitive measures utilized by the Israeli forces are a systemic method of imposition on the Palestinian civilians' intrinsic rights. It serves to ensure that any actor that opposes the Israeli authorities pays for their actions.

In 2018 Israeli authorities have demolished 538 Palestinian homes and facilities across the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem, leaving 1,300 Palestinians and 225 children homeless.²⁸ This is prohibited under IHL, Article 50 of the Hague Regulations, annexed to the 1907 Hague Convention, establishing that: "No general penalty, pecuniary or otherwise, shall be inflicted upon the population on account of the acts of individuals for which they cannot be regarded as jointly and severally responsible." Furthermore, Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that "No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties...are prohibited." Israel is imposing collective punishment on Palestinians through punitive house demolitions has also been recognized by international

²⁴ UNCRC, Article 37(b)

²⁵ UN General Assembly, Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), 10 December 1984; ICCPR, Article 7.

²⁶ <http://www.addameer.org/statistics>

²⁷ <http://www.addameer.org/publications/joint-annual-report-around-6500-arrests-2018>

²⁸ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20181229-israel-demolished-538-homes-facilities-in-west-bank-in-2018/>

human rights treaty bodies.²⁹ According to B'etselem in 2018 Israeli forces demolished 9 houses in the West-Bank as a form of collective punishment 6 of them were conducted in December³⁰.

Women as key actors in the daily functioning of civil society in Palestinian culture are adversely affected by the actions conducted by the Israeli authorities. In cases involving freedom of movement and residency revocation, women humiliated by soldiers at check points carry the indignation and anger without any remedial avenue. Residency revocation is the process where Palestinian residency permits are revoked by Israeli authorities, while family reunification is the process whereby individuals apply for residency permits to reunite with their families. Both represent the power Israel holds over fundamental Palestinian rights – the right to private and family life – and both are examples of Israeli demographic reconstruction by decree.

These policies form part of Israel's 2020 "Master Plan" with the aim of reducing the Arab population of East Jerusalem to under 28%.³¹ Thus, residency revocation and denial of family reunification are designed with the aim of altering facts on the ground and forcibly transferring Palestinians from Jerusalem, in order to maintain a majority Jewish Israeli demographic. According to official figures, 14,595 Palestinians from East Jerusalem had their residency status revoked between 1967 and the end of 2016.³² These revocations were carried out for a number of reasons, but mostly due to what Israel has deemed the failure to demonstrate a "centre of life" in East Jerusalem. The "centre of life" policy entails the practice of permanent revocation of residency for Palestinian Jerusalemites where the Israeli Ministry of the Interior deems that a Jerusalem Palestinian does not have his/her "centre of life" in Jerusalem but rather lives in the occupied West Bank or elsewhere, or has stayed abroad for 6 years or obtained residency/citizenship of another country.³³ Providing proof that Jerusalem is one's "centre of life" is onerous. This necessitates providing to Israeli authorities numerous documents, "including such items as home ownership papers or a rent contract, various bills (water, electricity, and municipal taxes), salary slips, proof of receiving medical care in the city, certification of children's school registration."³⁴

On the national level, the current political and democratic structures set in place in the Palestinian Territory are unable to truly change the underlying issues that afflict the Palestinian public; both in the areas of the West Bank that are governed by the PA and Hamas, in Gaza. According to an article on foreign policy, in which it argued that "there is a lack of critical leadership as well as transparent forms of checks and balances, this all in combination with the crippling impact of the Israeli occupation creates a difficult

²⁹ For example, CEDAW Committee "Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Israel" (2017) CEDAW/C/ISR/CO/6 para.32 and Committee Against Torture, "Concluding observations of the Committee against Torture" (2009) CAT/C/ISR/CO/4 para.33

³⁰ https://www.btselem.org/punitive_demolitions/statistics

³¹ This Week in Palestine "The Israeli Master Plan 2020 for Jerusalem" Available at: <http://thisweekinpalestine.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/The-Israeli-Master-Plan-2020-for-Jerusalem.pdf>

³² Hamoked, "Update 6.4.17" (2017) Available at: <http://www.hamoked.org/Document.aspx?dID=Updates1864>

³³ Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, "From Diversity to Racial Segregation and Domination: Palestinians in Jerusalem" (2014) p.5 Available at: <https://bdsmovement.net/files/2014/05/Fact-Sheet-Jerusalem-1948-present.pdf>

³⁴ Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) "Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid" (2017) E/ESCWA/ECRI/2017/1 p.42

to maneuver political and social dynamic. This intrinsic difficulty prevents Palestinian people from being able to confront and tackle the difficulty of societal and political oppression that affects them”.³⁵

Moreover, the impact this has on Palestinian women represents a host of issues pertaining to critical amendments to the Palestinian Penal Law, Family Protection Law and Personal Status Law. This is further complicated by the absence of the Palestinian Legislative Council, which creates an obstacle to legislative changes being passed as a whole, especially after PA President Mahmoud Abbas's announcement³⁶ in December to implement the so called “Constitutional Court's” decision to dissolve the Palestinian Legislative Council which is regarded as an unconstitutional decision that will perpetuate the separation between Gaza and the West Bank. Furthermore, there are constitutional and legal violations of the decision making it "invalid and unconstitutional, which violates the Basic Law and the Constitutional Court Law", which should be viewed as a decision with a political nature which concentrates the three powers in the hands of the Palestinian President.

Despite minor amendments to current legislation by presidential decrees that have the power of law; the results have proven to be insufficient in actualizing the necessary political change to address the challenges that face Palestinian women. The need for adoption of a modified Palestinian Protection Law has not yet materialized. This despite the continuous call from WCLAC and other women’s rights organizations to pass law to protect girls and women victims of sexual crimes and domestic violence within the family has not been passed yet.

After CEDAW Review of State of Palestine in July, there hasn’t been political will to harmonize between national legislations and international treaties in order to introduce an integrated legal system that reduces gender-based discrimination and eliminates violence against women and girls. For instance, The Personal Status Law continues to discriminate against women, in divorce, inheritance, and child custody. Child marriage still remains as a significant problem, especially in the West Bank where girls aged 14.5 and boys aged 15.5 are still allowed to get married. Not only the Personal Status Law needs to be reviewed but also there is a need for passing the Family Protection Law which is still not passed by the president.

Furthermore, during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence campaign a senior Palestinian official - Mahmoud Habash Supreme Sharia judge in the Palestinian Authority - attempted to justify violence against women on national TV, violating the Palestinian Basic Law, which forbids gender-based discrimination and calls for the protection of the family and children. Such statement reflected a weak Palestinian government and raised doubts and questions related to the PA’s willingness to comply with its international obligations. According to the review the Palestinian government must publish the Convention in the official gazette without any delay. Additionally, women are politically underrepresented at all levels, thus the government must adopt a law of 30% quotas for the political

³⁵ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/24/palestinians-have-been-abandoned-by-their-leaders/>

³⁶ <https://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=782153>

participation of women, and must also urgently implement the national action plan UNSC 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and ensure that the budgets are allocated.

However, the successful repeal of Article 308 from the Jordanian penal code No. 16 of 1960 has been one of the main accomplishments for WCLAC this year. The arbitrary article which allowed for alleged rapist to marry their victims was repealed on 14th March 2018, through an official decree by Mahmoud Abbas. The grassroots campaigns to build awareness, such as the white dress 'Marry-Your-Rapist' initiative highlighted the core role that WCLAC has played in influencing state actors into actualizing serious change towards woman's rights in Palestine.

In early February Palestinian government laws forced close to 200 civil servants in the West Bank into early retirement. The vast majority of these persons were employed in the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health. Many of the persons were women who overwhelmingly had 'very good' to 'excellent' annual performance reviews.³⁷

The silencing of journalists, through arrest, detention, interrogation without charge and intimidation has continued into 2018. Since July, there were 87 attacks committed by the Palestinian authority in Gaza and the West Bank against journalists, according to MADA Center For Development and Media Freedoms monthly reports.³⁸ For instance, the new draft of the Cybercrime Law which was issued and published in the official gazette in May 2018 without having undergone adequate consultations with human rights' organizations nor with civil society. The law has ultimately added to restrictions on Palestinian media, privacy and press freedoms imposed by Israeli security forces, such as constant raids of media centers and the political detention of journalists, contributing to a pre-existing environment of fear and mass surveillance. It equipped Palestinian security forces with a legal mechanism to limit access to information and arbitrarily detain journalists and activists according to Article 20 of it³⁹.

On June 13th, the protest was against the punitive measures that were implemented by the PA against Gaza. In the aftermath of the protests dozens were arrested and tear gas was used to disperse the crowd of people that had formed. The PA opted to ban protests the following Sunday after the demonstration. During the protest both local and international press actors were forcefully silenced, forced to delete footage, and some arrested for documenting what occurred that day. This event further curtailed the rights of the press to inform the public, as well as the physical violence used against Palestinian citizens by its domestic police had not occurred before this event at such a scale.⁴⁰ The actions taken by the Palestinian Authority to quell the protests resulted in masked, plain clothed and Palestinian Security Personnel aligned with the government to forcefully disperse the protest. This resulted in the use of clubs, electric batons, tear gas grenades and sound bombs being used. A large number of Palestinian Women

³⁷ Al-HAQ submission to the committee on the elimination of discrimination against women on the first periodic review The State of Palestine

³⁸ <http://www.madacenter.org/reports.php?id=5&lang=1>

³⁹ <https://www.arab-reform.net/en/node/1384>

⁴⁰ <http://english.pnn.ps/2018/06/14/palestinian-forces-break-up-ramallah-protest-over-gaza/>

were also sexually assaulted and harassed, verbally abused and sprayed with pepper spray.⁴¹ Furthermore, it was registered that 33 attacks against journalists were committed during that period, 10 in Gaza Strip and 23 in the West Bank both were committed in the peaceful demonstrations. Nevertheless, female journalists were not spared. The number of female journalists who were affected by these assaults were 8 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.⁴²

For the past two months Palestinians living in the West Bank have been protesting against the Social Security Law asking the government to pull back on implementing it. According to the law, all workers are subject to the same percentage of contribution to the Social Security Corporation, with no clauses which provide for workers who receive under minimum wage⁴³. Thousands of Palestinians especially those who work in the private sector opposed the implementation of the law mainly due to the lack of trust between the people and the government, the deductions of the salaries and the contributions of the workers, the political instability since the Palestinian territories are under Israeli occupation in addition to the dysfunctionality of the PLC (Legislative Council) for the past 11 years, which is a vital official instrument of control and accountability for the government, thus there is no guarantee for workers would ever benefit from their contributions.

According to a study published by WCLAC the Social Security Law has articles that are discriminatory against women, also it views that the current version of the Law contains supporting factors in expelling women and motivating them to enter the labor market although they constitute the highest proportion of the labour force that receives below the minimum wage. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, women constitute 19.1% of the Palestinian labour force, 43% of the women working in the private sector receive salaries below the minimum wage. In addition, women cover the highest percentage of those who work in irregular employment, which amounts to 46.1% in 2017.⁴⁴ For example, Article 70 (2) deprives the daughters from their right in the pension in case of marriage while it keeps the right of the son regardless of his social status which reinforces the stereotypical image of women as being always economically dependent on the male. Many of the core issues still remain uncovered or undealt, especially the subject of maternity leave and its related details in case of abortion or the birth of a deceased child, thus many organisations have been waiting for the implementation of the law's bylaws in order to cover many unclear parts in it which unfortunately haven't been published yet. Apart from the PA's legislations, the issue of violence against women remains present, in 2018 WCLAC monitored and documented 23 cases of femicide, 13 cases were identified in the West Bank and 10 in the Gaza Strip.

Violence against women comes in different forms, for instance The Arab Center for the Development of Social Media (7amleh) and the Swedish Kvinna til Kvinna Foundation published in November a

⁴¹ AI-HAQ submission to the committee on the elimination of discrimination against women on the first periodic review The State of Palestine: available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/PSE/INT_CEDAW_NGO_PSE_31670_E.pdf

⁴² http://www.madacenter.org/report.php?lang=1&id=1802&category_id=13&year=2018

⁴³ <https://mondoweiss.net/2018/12/dispatch-palestine-review/>

⁴⁴ <http://www.wclac.org/files/library/18/11/h136aobiry0ujrtxwut31.pdf>

comprehensive research on the phenomenon of gender-based violence in social networks and the Internet. This research is considered the first of its kind in Palestine and regionally. The study included qualitative and quantitative aspects of the phenomenon of gender-based violence in social networks. The quantitative aspect mainly depended on 6 focus groups in the areas of Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jerusalem and Haifa. Additionally, a face to face poll that included more than 1200 Palestinian women between the ages of 15-35. The study showed that the phenomenon has increased in the last few years, and varies from hacking accounts, publishing personal details, extortion, receiving pictures with inappropriate content and more.

The research showed that one in four women closed her social media accounts and withdrew from the Internet as a result of violence and harassment, one third of the respondents realized attempts of hacking on their social media accounts and one third received pornographic photos and videos without her consent. Whereas women still generally attempt to deal with such issues personally and in family and friend circles, with one sixth of the women deleted their own accounts, and only one out of four women made an official complaint with the police⁴⁵. Such findings raises doubts related to the protection of women on social media platforms and the Cyber Crime law and if there is a governmental will to protect women or the passage of such law mainly to undermine freedoms and Human Rights' defenders.

Progress towards Outcomes & Achievements

The year 2018 is the third phase of implementing WCLAC's five-year strategic plan, Learning, Adapting, and Imagining to Creating Change.

Strategic goal 1: Contribute to the protection and empowerment of women suffering discrimination and violence

Provision of quality Protection Legal & Social Services and Emergency protection.

As part of WCLAC's strategic direction to contribute to the protection and empowerment of women suffering discrimination and violence" the Centre maintained its work towards providing social and legal counseling and emergency services to women victims of violence. When it comes to social and legal counseling and emergency services, **during the past three years** WCLAC provided legal and social services to **3260** women in the Opt. It's worth mentioning that most of the legal cases that WCLAC dealt with mainly focused on divorce and alimony. **1118** women received in court representation, WCLAC obtained **712** legal verdicts in favor of women, **272** out-of-court settlements were reached through out-of-court

⁴⁵https://7amleh.org/2018/11/22/one-third-of-palestinian-young-women-are-subjected-to-violence-and-harassment-on-the-internet/?fbclid=IwAR0M5LiAtfTFSvUDGoLHA6_8-xFSbnF3yoU9JigPeU7CB6ZdJ8YyVdfnjWU

settlements or mediation facilitated by WCLAC's team of lawyers and social workers, **1043** women received long-term and social counselling, and **961** women had one-off legal consultations through the helpline and helpdesk. Additionally, **89** women were hosted at WCLAC's emergency shelter. The continuous professional interventions, in partnership with the Family Protection Unit, and the MoSD, enabled WCLAC to bring **60** women back from the shelter to their homes, based on the women's own initiative and after several joint sessions with their families. WCLAC ensured these women will benefit from better conditions within their families, and will be protected from violence, in tandem with gaining more dignity and respect.

WCLAC maintained its work towards protection and empowerment of women suffering discrimination and violence. WCLAC continued support provided to women victims of violence to access justice, protection and empowerment to better claim their rights. In 2018, a total of **477** women were supported to access their social and legal rights in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Analysis shows that most of the legal cases that WCLAC dealt with revolved around divorce (27% of the cases) and alimony (51.1% of the cases). The high rate of cases related to alimony reflects the poverty and living conditions of these women as they depend on the sum of money as a source of living/income as they lack other financial resources due to early marriage, or not completing their studies. 71% of the women beneficiaries for instance didn't complete their education, 10% of them were married at an early age. WCLAC's human rights feminist approach to support women's access to justice is conditioned with examining all options to obtain legal settlement either through court representation or mediation. Women carried out court representation in **315** different cases, WCLAC obtained **191** legal verdicts in favor of women, **66** out-of-court settlements through mediation facilitated by WCLAC's team of lawyers and social workers. Further, WCLAC realizes that women victims of violence are in need to psychosocial support through a well-defined intervention plan between WCLAC social worker and the women herself to empower these women, develop their knowledge about their rights and increase their self-reliance. WCLAC provided **213** women with long-term and social counselling through individual sessions as well as providing them with awareness raising material on alimony, custody, and divorce rights. Additionally, taking into consideration mobility and accessibility issues; especially for women living in remote areas, WCLAC provides consultation through the free help-line and e-counselling. A total of **151** women have received social and legal counselling through the help-line and phone, which provided these women with advice on where to access their rights.

WCLAC emergency shelter, which is the only civil society led shelter managed to provide protection to **40** women accompanied with **9** children for 2018, this number is considerably high compared with the same period of last year (24 women with one child). This increase is due to better coordination with service providers and better utilization of referral mechanisms under the National Referral System. Realizing that protection services provided are integral part of the National Referral System, ongoing coordination through referral of these cases and case-conferences were done with Family Protection Units at the Police, and the MoSD. Further, as part of WCLAC's belief of women's right to live in a safe environment through providing them with skills and knowledge to claim their rights and work with local communities to create conducive environment for their reintegration, a total of 24 women managed to return back to their homes. WCLAC ensured through comprehensive coordination with social affairs units in different

governorates that these women will benefit from better conditions within their families, and will be protected from violence, in tandem with gaining more dignity and respect.

Remote and marginalized areas are extremely underserved with social and legal services. Accessibility and knowledge about these services are rarely available for women, thus they suffer from dire need for services and awareness to increase their access to their rights. Through building the capacity of grassroots organizations on providing social and legal counseling to women, as well as awareness raising, such women have a window of opportunity to access services in their own communities or nearby ones. WCLAC worked on extending its outreach through building a new partnership with Nahdit Bent Al-Reef Charitable Society in Dura southern Hebron, as it covers 45 villages through health care services it provides, and the trust it holds within the local community. By the end of 2017, WCLAC signed the new MOU with Bent Al-Reef covering a period of 2 years. With the creation of a new partnership in Hebron during the first half of 2018, WCLAC now has partnerships that cover the North, Center and the South of Palestine, which will enable women in remote areas to access the different services and seek help when needed. This contributed to supporting women in remote and marginalized areas to access their legal and social rights and provide mechanisms to detect cases of violence against women through not only social, legal and awareness sessions but also through mobile clinics and outreach programs.



Strategic goal 2: Promote women's rights to access justice and eliminate discriminatory policies against them

Development of Policies & Procedures to eliminate Discrimination against Women

Despite Palestine's accession to international conventions and treaties, no credible political will is available to enact modern and non-discriminatory laws that comply with these conventions. At the national level WCLAC continued its efforts to influence the Palestinian Authority to comply with international conventions and treaties it accede to; especially CEDAW. In July 11th the CEDAW committee discussed the initial report of State of Palestine in its 70th Session where it raised numerous concerns and questions, which were later published in the [concluding observations](#) of the committee. In preparation for this session, WCLAC in cooperation with Human Rights Watch delivered an [oral statement](#) to the CEDAW committee which focused primarily on violence against women within the family and article 16 of CEDAW summarizing the violations related to this article, to be taken into account when making recommendations to the State of Palestine. WCLAC and numerous other NGOs further highlighted gaps in the initial report and the Palestinian response to the CEDAW [list of issues](#) after the 68th CEDAW pre-

session on Palestine. The Committee recommended that, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention, the State party should adopt, without delay, national legislation that includes a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women covering all prohibited grounds of discrimination and encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in both the public and private spheres; ensure that the proposed draft penal code of 2011, which is aimed at prohibiting and punishing discrimination, is revised to bring it into conformity with the Convention. Furthermore, it called the State party to fully incorporate the provisions of the Convention into its national law and ensure its implementation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, ensure that the interpretation of the Supreme Constitutional Court holding that treaties acceded to by the State party take precedence over national law only insofar as they are consistent with the national, religious and cultural identity of the Palestinian people, does not absolve the State party of its obligations under the Convention, and take concrete steps to accede to the Optional Protocol and publish the Convention in the Official Gazette.⁴⁶

It should be mentioned that WCLAC developed CEDAW shadow report on Palestine highlighting issues related to Article 16 of the convention on personal status issues, GBV, child marriage, sexual violence, and safe abortions. WCLAC also responded to the list of issues raised by the Committee at the Pre-sessional Meeting in November 2018 as well as the response of the State of Palestine to the list of issues, to highlight the gaps in the official report of the State of Palestine. WCLAC submitted the CEDAW [shadow report](#) on Palestine on the 8th of June. This report was prepared in collaboration with Human Rights Watch and Equality Now. The issues that WCLAC raised were related to article 16, included: the Personal Status Law applied in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Muslims and Christians and the discrimination it entails against women especially in marriage, divorce, children custody, guardianship, child marriage, women's marital financial rights and inheritance. It also addressed how the applied Islamic Personal Status Law allows a man to have multiple wives whereas a woman cannot marry without the consent of her guardian. Furthermore, WCLAC discussed divorce in the Christian family law which is almost unreachable, expensive and takes many years. WCLAC also focused on violations related to the age of marriage. In the meantime, there is still a gap in the age of marriage between the Gaza strip and the West bank, in the West Bank the minimum age for marriage for females is 14.5 years and 15.5 years for males. In the Gaza Strip, the minimum age for marriage for females is 17 years and 18 years for males.

By the end of November WCLAC launched its campaign calling for a modern and civil Personal Status Law that can be optional and an alternative for women based on full equality between males and females to spare women from dealing with long and humiliating procedure in Shari'a courts. In this campaign WCLAC called for raising marriage age to 18 years old, prohibiting polygamy, the spouses must be given a mandatory period of attempts to conciliate before divorce, it also demanded that the divorce should be acquired and recorded only in the presence of the spouses; as in most cases, the divorce takes place with

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https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FPSE%2FCO%2F1&Lang=en

a single will, outside the judicial framework, or without the knowledge of the wife and does not register it in court therefore divorce must be judicial for the parties, documenting the wife's financial and social rights in the divorce record, and that the common funds that are obtained during the marriage must be shared equally between spouses. WCLAC mobilized political parties effectively participate in this campaign through calling them to adopt a modern approach that calls for having a Personal Status Law that provides equality for all Palestinians regardless of their religion or sex. Furthermore, this year WCLAC has been pushing for adopting the Family Protection Law, luckily by the end of this year the Palestinian Cabinet approved the law and appointed it to the president.

Due to the dysfunctional status of the Palestinian Legislative Council, considerable efforts were put in place to influence the process of abolishing discriminatory articles from existing outdated laws; especially the Penal Code. WCLAC and other women and human rights organizations have successfully managed after launching national advocacy campaign to pursue the Palestinian government and the President to abolish Article 308 (on March 5th, 2018), from the Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 of 1960. This article constitutes a flagrant violation of the rights of Palestinian women, which exempts the perpetrator of 13 types of sexual crimes from persecution in case of a valid marriage between the aggressor and the victim. The Cabinet decision has made further modifications to the Penal Code through adding a fifth paragraph to Article 99 excluding honor crimes against women from their customary consideration of extenuating circumstances.



Another major success was made this year through Cabinet decisions that granted women the rights to issue passports for their children, open bank accounts for them and transfer them between schools without the need for a permission from a male guardian. This announcement was a great victory for WCLAC and women rights organisations, as we have been working on this topic for more than 18 years, WCLAC was one of the leading organizations in publishing articles, studies, analytical reports and holding awareness raising sessions. This year WCLAC launched a campaign to abolish Article 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 of 1960, which is applicable in the West Bank.

Work towards Holding Israel Accountable for Human Rights Violations

Israeli military occupation, Israeli's punitive measures continue seriously unabated, affecting every aspect of Palestinian life, especially that of Palestinian women who endure the direct and indirect impacts: everything from minor house arrests, house demolitions, punitive measures and residency revocations. Despite repeated international condemnations of collective punitive measures, Israeli military forces multiplied aggression against Palestinian communities. Through its ECSOC consultative status, WCLAC's efforts to hold Israel accountable to Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law reaffirmed through submissions of reports highlighting the impact of prolonged Israeli occupation on women. WCLAC

contributed to the Special Rapporteur of oPt; Mr. S. Michael Lynk report on access to health rights in Gaza through submission of a report on [Women's Access to Health in Gaza](#) . This was followed by a meeting with him in Amman where WCLAC presented another two evidence based reports and highlighted the impact of Israeli violation to Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in H2 Area in Hebron and East Jerusalem on lives of Palestinian women. These reports were based on first hand data collected from women themselves live in these areas. WCLAC emphasized the direct indirect impact of Israeli occupation on women's access to services, access to education, gender based violence, and public participation in H2 area in Hebron. Specific focus on women in Jerusalem was highlighted in the second report that was based on testimonies collected from women impact of minor house arrest, house demolition, punitive measure and residency revocation on them as mothers and individuals. The Special Rapporteur expressed his interest in the gender analysis presented by WCLAC promising to allocate specific section in his upcoming report in October to present analysis and recommendations mentioned in the reports. He also requested further analysis and testimonies to be sent by August to strengthen analysis and findings to be considered in his report.

WCLAC's General Director, First Palestinian Woman to Address UNSC

On October 25th, Women's Centre For Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) General Director Randa Siniora presented a statement at the United Nation's Security Council in New-York. This statement was made on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on "Women and peace and security." The statement highlighted the gendered impact of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, bringing the voices of Palestinian women, who still face violence, discrimination, deprivation and systematic violations of their human rights on a daily basis. Mrs. Siniora addressed the UN Security Council as a peace leader and as a human rights defender who has witnessed, documented, and spoken out about violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for three decades, bringing the voices of Palestinian women, who still face violence and deprivation of their human rights on a daily basis.⁴⁷

WCLAC participates in The UN 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

This year, WCLAC participated both as an independent NGO and as a part of the official Palestinian delegation, in the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CWS62). The session took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, from the 12th to the 23th of March 2018. The main theme of the session was Challenges and Opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls." WCLAC aimed through its participation in the CSW's 62nd session to shed the light on night raids and arrest in attempt to arrest family members and its effect on

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[http://www.wclac.org/Publication/127/Statement By Womens Centre For Legal Aid and Counselling WCLAC General Director at the United Nations Security Council](http://www.wclac.org/Publication/127/Statement%20By%20Womens%20Centre%20For%20Legal%20Aid%20and%20Counselling%20WCLAC%20General%20Director%20at%20the%20United%20Nations%20Security%20Council)

women, the effects of settlements and the settlement expansion policy on daily lives of Palestinian women, property destruction, demolition, and the lack of adequate housing, targeting women human rights defenders, women journalists and activists, forcible eviction of Palestinians from occupied Jerusalem and collective punishment as a tool in forcible transfer and targeting of civilians. On March 16th, the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling organized a parallel event in the UN building in New York in cooperation with the Palestinian Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Other Palestinian CSOs were part of this event, which is entitled "Palestinian Women Under Israeli Occupation: The Gendered Impact of Occupation". More than 70 persons attended the event and were engaged in the discussion that followed the presentations, WCLAC briefed them on the different violations that Palestinian women face especially in Jerusalem, including restriction of movements, residency revocation, home demolitions, child arrest, and night raids. Special focus was given to the situation of Jerusalemite women who face numerous challenges caused by the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation, especially restrictions on movement, home demolitions and forcible transfer.

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

As part of WCLAC approach of developing institutional and human capacity, WCLAC carried out a mid-term evaluation of its five years strategic plan 2016-2020 to review performance against the strategic plan and the attendant WCLAC's implementation Framework, perform a situation analysis including a deep analysis of the political context and other elements that define our working context (political context, donor's funding, financial situation and provide recommendations and way forward for informing the implementation of the second half of the strategic plan, The ultimate aim of such ongoing review is to support WCLAC' aim to deliver its programs in an efficient and effective manner leading to its ultimate goal on becoming a learning organization.

The mid-term evaluation was carried out by an external consultant using participatory approach and meetings with different stakeholders. The report was issued in June and confirms the importance of our organisations' work. The report highlights several positive points about WCLAC's interventions such as WCLAC has established itself as a unique institution providing continuous and highly professional social and legal services and protection to women exposed to violence and discrimination, as well as providing legal representation to them in courts; WCLAC has been successful in extending its outreach through building partnerships with CBOs to provide social and legal counselling in addition to awareness-raising of women in marginalized and underserved areas; WCLAC is the only NGO in Palestine that has a shelter providing emergency protection to women survivors of violence and/or those whose lives are in jeopardy; WCLAC became the only Palestinian body that documents and exposes Israeli human rights violations against Palestinian women and uses UN mechanisms to hold Israel accountable to these violations; WCLAC exhibits growing expertise and focus on international advocacy mechanisms. It has effectively used Shadow CEDAW report as a central national and international monitoring and advocacy tool.

Accordingly, a response plan to recommendations introduced in the report was made through discussion with WCLAC staff. This plan included identification of resources, timeframe and roles and responsibilities.

Recommendation raised by the evaluators can be summarised : to revisit the LFA and try to make it leaner and less detailed by reducing the number of goals to a maximum of two and the number of strategic objectives to a maximum five. In addition, the main activities need to be clustered and their number reduced to a reasonable level, introduce premarital counselling as a “preventive” measure to reduce cases of violence and divorce, create a network of service providing CBOs together with WCLAC to have regular exchange of experience and mutual learning and support, develop a set of graded training modules starting with an introductory, i.e., ‘beginners’ level to advanced levels, agree with the Police academy to include issues related to GBV and women rights in the curricula in order to provide awareness building/training including information about the National Referral System to all cadets. In addition to requesting WCLAC is to develop efficient computer based M&E either by expanding the existing MIS to accommodate information related to Plan execution or developing a separate M&E system. Furthermore, to broaden its awareness building influence, WCLAC is to promote gender and women’s rights mainstreaming in all universities curricula, especially those related to law, media, medical studies and social work, as well as in the Police Academy.

Challenges

Israeli Occupation Policies and Political Instability

Problems surrounding the revocation of the residency rights, family reunification policies for Palestinian families in the oPt including East Jerusalem, the continuing house demolitions, along with other punitive measures imposed by the Israeli occupation, continue to impair the general morale and psychological well-being of the Palestinian population, thereby disproportionately affecting women.

The occupation policies continue to be a multilateral challenge for WCLAC, not only due to political instability but also because we have come to understand that increased violence from the occupation leads to more violence endured by women within the general society and the household as well. The violence of the occupation disproportionately affects women, both directly and indirectly. As the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women highlights in her report on Israel, “patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes are deeply entrenched in society and petrified and tolerated in the context of conflict and occupation constituting [the] root causes of GBV against women.” Recognizing the gendered nature of the occupation, and its direct effect of legitimizing and perpetuating GBV, she makes a clear call for Israel to end “the occupation and conflict and to promptly address its gendered impact in line with its obligations under human rights and humanitarian law principles.” This is further exacerbated by the continued internal political divide which works against the interests of the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and increases sufferings of women, especially victims of gender based violence.

Due to this political divide, women in the Gaza Strip cannot benefit from measures undertaken in the West Bank to protect them from GBV, such as the family protection units or shelters for victims of GBV which are not available in the Gaza Strip. With the Israeli military siege and restrictions of movement imposed by the

occupation, women and their families with chronic diseases suffer from this military siege and are denied permit for medical referral to hospitals in Jerusalem, the West Bank or abroad.

Fundraising Challenges, and a Shrinking Space for Human Rights and Civil Society Organisations

Similarly to last year, WCLAC continues to suffer from the shrinking spaces for human rights organisations and limited funding. The unstable political and financial setting of the area has led to increased competition. There is significantly less core funding available as donors continue to prioritise special projects rather than programmes. Donors have shifted priorities to other areas in the region. This shift in funding has made it difficult for WCLAC to meet the needs and requirements of its beneficiaries, and is struggling with overheads and running costs.

Constraints on the rights and freedoms of the Palestinian society have naturally affected the work of local NGOs. The smooth passage of funds between organisations is affected, due to Israeli policies that constrain the movement of funds to bank accounts of Palestinian NGO's in occupied East Jerusalem. Many NGO and International NGO bank accounts in Jerusalem were closed down completely. These impediments persist also due to new measures adopted by the Palestinian Ministry of Interior, which further complicates the transaction process from organisations in areas under the Palestinian Authority control and those in East Jerusalem. Transactions to East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank are being treated as international transfers, causing delays and extensive bureaucratic measures. WCLAC is addressing these issues in cooperation with the Palestinian NGO network, to overcome the complications imposed by these restrictions.

Risks Assessment and Mitigating Measures

During last year and the reporting period, WCLAC invested in reviewing the risks and mitigating measures to prevent any adverse consequences on the Centre and its work. For the purpose of this report we highlighted some major risks that we think have a direct and indirect impact on our work and women's rights and the relevant mitigating measures took by WCLAC's team. Political instability still plays a major role in increasing gender based violence. Intensity of conflict and aggression against Palestinians in general and men in particular is diverted towards women as the least fortunate in the family. WCLAC programs invested in targeting men in local communities to create agents for change who are equipped with knowledge and skills to advocate for women's rights in their communities.

Political instability also leads to increase of settlers' violence and night raids against Palestinians; especially in areas adjacent to Israeli settlements. This is combined with mobility restrictions through the checkpoint regime. WCLAC realizes that impact of such aggression and mobility restriction on women are paramount. These women live in a patriarchal society, which increases its dominance on women through imposing certain rules to *protect* women. Thus, women in need for social and legal services will be victimized both from the patriarchal society and the Israeli measures. Therefore, WCLAC's free helpline provides some

refuge for these women through providing them with social and legal advice without the need to physically access our offices.

WCLAC also documents cases Israeli violations in these areas from women themselves to define impact of human rights and IHL violations on their lives. These testimonies are then analyzed and submitted to different UN machinery. Instability of the political situation in the region and increased waves of conservatism is also affecting Palestine society either directly or indirectly. This has created new perceptions within local communities about women's rights and created a kind of recession on women's rights in some local communities. Therefore, WCLAC paid attention to this issue through targeting university students, young male and female volunteers and community activists to raise their awareness on women and human rights and increase their skills to design and carry out community initiatives to promote these rights.

The division between West Bank and Gaza, which led to dysfunctional Palestinian Legislative Council affected the review and enactment of new modern laws. This contributed to maintaining the de facto situation of resorting to existing Jordanian and Egyptian laws; especially the Penal Code and Family Status Law. WCLAC realizes that the State of Palestine has considerable obligations towards international conventions it acceded to; especially CEDAW. Therefore, WCLAC submitted a shadow report on Palestine highlighting issues related to family status and penal code to influence CEDAW Committee to adopt these recommendations. The List of Issues provided by CEDAW Committee to the Palestinian Government included a large number of issues highlighted in our report, which should be responded to before the official review session in June 2018. WCLAC also designed advocacy campaigns to influence decision makers to ratify laws that comply with international conventions through Cabinet decision and Presidential decrees. Finally, at this stage no new risks have been identified for 2018.

WCLAC's Interrelated Issues

The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) is an independent Palestinian, non-profit, non-governmental organization that seeks to develop a democratic Palestinian society based on the principles of gender equality and social justice. Based on its feminist vision fostering equality and social justice, WCLAC doesn't only play prominent role in addressing gender-based violence in Palestinian society it also contributes in addressing:

Human Rights Issues

Protecting women's rights includes, inter alia, guaranteeing their access to service provisions such as welfare, legal aid, legal protection, health care, and more. In the context of the OPT, this also includes defending Palestinian women against the patriarchal systems and practices embedded in Palestinian society. Further, in the context of the Israeli military occupation under which Palestinian women suffer the double-edged discrimination of ethno-religious identity and gender, women are the most disadvantaged group and therefore the most susceptible to human rights violations. In this context, our work includes documenting eye witness testimonies from women who have been subjected to violence and violations of their rights by the Israeli authorities; in 2017 WCLAC documented 135 such testimonials. Additionally, WCLAC realizes that members of unions and political parties play a significant role in creating social change

among community members through shouldering the responsibility of other community members through raising the awareness of their peers, creating protection networks at the community level that can coordinate and collaborate with governmental and nongovernmental service providers to reveal cases of abuse and violence against women in their communities, and voice the needs of legal reform through advocating for change.

Protection of Environment

WCLAC doesn't have a specific policy related to the protection of environment, however WCLAC ensures environmental friendly interventions. For example, WCLAC uses MIS to record clients' data to minimize as much as possible the use of paper files, most of the time we use recycled paper, the usage of glass cups instead of plastic cups in the organization's offices in addition to the use of emails for correspondence to ensure our concern regarding the protection of environment.

Anti-corruption

Our organization's long-standing commitment to assisting women in achieving their rights with integrity means avoiding corruption in any form, including bribery, maintaining confidentiality and privacy while providing services, as well as complying with the anti-corruption law. We provide guidance to our team (lawyers, social workers and field workers) on how to conduct legal aid, testimonies and counselling in a fair, ethical and legal manner. All associates of our organization are required to read, understand and follow the precepts of our Code of Conduct and procurement manual, which includes anti-corruption expectations for all employees. WCLAC decision making process is done at different levels to ensure transparency and accountability. Based on the organizational structure and internal procedures, decisions taken at the Board of Directors are separate and binding for the whole organization. These decisions are separate from those taken by executive management. Further, WCLAC has developed its procurement manual in a way that ensures transparency and separation of roles and responsibilities throughout the procurement process. A committee is defined to open and review tenders responsible of analyzing the offers technically and financially and present their recommendation. The decision is then taken by another level, which is a major part of the anti-corruption process WCLAC follows.

Part II. Detailed Activity Report

Strategic goal 1: Contribute to the protection and empowerment of women suffering discrimination and violence

1.1. Provide quality legal and social services that respond to the needs of women exposed to violence and discrimination

WCLAC provides social-legal counselling and protection services to Palestinian women in order to promote their self-autonomy, support them to access justice, and raise understanding of their rights and how to claim them through social counselling or Sharia courts.

1.1.1. Continuous thorough legal and social services for women in Palestine

WCLAC provides some of the most vital and effective services for female survivors of GBV through four organisational branches: Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Jerusalem. Over the reporting period, WCLAC provided long-term legal or social counselling to 477 women of all ages, 114 of whom were from Ramallah and Jerusalem, 125 of whom were from the Southern West Bank. Out of these cases, 34 women received only social counselling, 26 women received only legal; a majority of 179 women received both legal and social services. WCLAC has found that certain social realities are exacerbating the situation, requiring social or legal support. Some of these conditions include: early marriage, polygamy, poverty, unemployment, and denial of education that can prevent them from achieving full access to their rights and economic independence.

Throughout the reporting period, 315 new cases for legal support were brought to WCLAC. Each woman might have more than one court case, and 69 cases from previous years were followed up on. Since the start of the year WCLAC lawyers obtained 191 verdicts were in favour of the women. Sixty-six of these cases were closed through mediation by WCLAC's team of lawyers and social workers while the rest remain pending within the courts. Through mediation, WCLAC was able to support the relevant parties in reaching long-term solutions to the problems faced by WCLAC's female clients. Most women were able to claim some or all of their rights via agreements signed by the husband/family member without bringing the case to court.

WCLAC noted that most of the legal cases revolved around personal status issues where 58% were around alimony, 26% of the cases were related to divorce, and 9% were related to children's custody. As for the rest of cases, 1% of the cases were related to general rights issues and implementing court decisions, 4% focused on dowry, and 2% of the cases were on marital obedience and housing. The high number of cases related to alimony reflects the living conditions of these women as they lack other economic resources, or income thus they depend on the alimony which doesn't provide just life for these women (it's around 400-600 NIS, and around 200-300 NIS for a child). Most of the time in cases related to alimony judges tend

to show empathy with males while questioning them if they tend to have debts or they provide assistance to anyone else in order to register a small amount of money for the woman.

According to WCLAC's MIS system 63% of the beneficiary's family income is below 500 NIS especially in Ramallah, Hebron and Jericho, 30.5% of the beneficiaries' income is around 2501 – 3000 NIS mainly in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Hebron. 17% of the women were referred to WCLAC by partners, 11% by other NGOs or centres, 6% by private lawyers and 54% were referred by the courts. The rest approached WCLAC directly.

Develop the skills of Sharia lawyer trainees on court procedures and gender sensitive representation to better provide legal service for women

During the reporting period, WCLAC developed the skills of 70 Sharia lawyer trainees (9 males and 61 females) in 4 locations Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem and East-Jerusalem on court procedures. The participants emphasized on the importance of the training in raising their capacity to plead before the Shari'a courts on women's issues particularly. Additionally it created awareness on gender issues and worked on developing supportive attitudes towards women among the trainees.

Among the various important topics raised in the trainings were: the mechanisms of resorting to courts, types of cases addressed at the Sharia courts, the conflict between civil and Shari'a court in the reinforcement of court decisions, the Personal Status law, the conflict between applicable laws, the ethics of the profession; and the mechanisms of handling cases with women. The training also focused on divorce, alimony, custody, dowry and the compatibility of personal status law with CEDAW.

Provide one-off legal and social consultations

In addition to long-term services, WCLAC is an active facilitator/ provider of one-off legal and social consultations for women. This service helps women obtain help in legal issues and decision making. The consultations are provided after awareness raising sessions, e-counselling, and helpline discussions. 260 consultations were direct, 40 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. A total of 41 consultations took place via the helpline where women were provided with advice on social and legal issues or referred either for long term intervention at one of WCLAC offices or to another institution. In 2018, 260 women approached WCLAC directly seeking a one-off consultation through one of our four branch offices.

The services provided by the Centre varied between cases of maintenance, custody, dispersion, divorce and family reunification cases, implementation of court decisions, custody, arbitrary divorce, and national insurance. There were also numerous social consultations on family problems, marital disputes, social empowerment, sexual assaults, marital problems, psychological support, shelter and sexual harassment. Analysis of cases supported during 2018 shows that ratio of 71% of the women beneficiaries didn't complete high school, 70% of the women beneficiaries' income is about 500 NIS, 10% of women were victims of early marriage; they got married at 14-16 years old. Women expressed that endogamy might be the main reason behind staying in the abusive relationship as they might be unable to seek divorce to maintain family relations, or it urges them to waiver their legal rights. It was obvious through analysing

these cases that living with the same place of the husband's family or in a close neighbourhood might lead up to serious family disagreements due to general interference in the woman's daily life.

Success Story: WCLAC enables a woman to access her legal and social rights

"A" is a mother of 5 came to WCLAC terrified and frustrated from her husband, who have been threatening of harming her and throw Acid on her face. Unfortunately, he succeeded in burning her sister's car but they were unable to prove it. The problem with "A" is that her husband is a violent man as well as her father in-law who has been harassing her verbally. WCLAC acted very quickly through obtaining a protection order for A and her children, then the lawyer headed to the Shari'a court to obtain court decisions regarding legal rights such as custody, alimony. At this stage, WCLAC also worked on providing her with social and psychological support through counselling sessions. Through the intervention it was clear that A perceived herself as a mother only without acknowledging importance of embracing her emotions or giving them a priority. WCLAC's social worker designed a long-term intervention plan with her, through the stages we realized that she didn't complete her high school education. This is an obstacle towards supporting A to become financially independent in order to leave the abusive marital relation. After long term intervention "A" decided to complete her education through registering in the ministry of education. At a certain stag her husband called her asking for her return back home while presenting his promises to change. She agreed to return back on one condition which is allowing her to complete her education, which he approved. Despite the social worker's advice to wait since they are not sure he will fulfill his promises, A was not strong enough to decide that she can live independently. After her return her husband annulled the agreement, then she realized that she can't continue in this relationship as she wants to pursue her dream of completing her education, she left the house with her 5 children.

At this stage, "A" is relieved with herself and her decision in moving forward with the legal procedures. For now, "A" says that she is able to live her life, make her own decisions and she feels that her relationship with her kids is stronger because she knows what she wants. She is planning to pursue her education to become economically independent and to become a better mother for her 5 children.

1.1.2. Effective integrated and holistic protection system implemented by different sectors working on the protection of women

Provide emergency protection services to women whose lives are in jeopardy, and survivors of violence

In 2018, 38 women along with 9 children were hosted at the emergency protection shelter in Jericho. This shelter is a place of immediate protection for women whose lives are under threat and in need of immediate intervention. WCLAC believes that the shelter is only a temporary safe space for women to seek protection and does not substitute the need for social and communal transformation on the approach to GBV. Out of the 38 women (aged 17 – 47), 13 were married, 15 were single, 9 were divorced, and 1 was widowed. More than two thirds of the cases were in their twenties and only three were 18 years old and below. Women sought assistance from the shelter for reasons such as escaping family

retaliation for out-of-wedlock relationships or pregnancy, inter-family violence and denial of rights, in addition to psychological illness or early marriage. The lack of employment and study opportunities also increased vulnerability to GBV amongst women as they became trapped within their social sphere, for instance 40% of the shelter's women clients haven't completed their education and are victims of domestic violence however only 15% of the women completed their education. It should be noted that 42.1% of the cases were related to domestic violence, 23.6% were related to out of wed-lock relations and pregnancy, 2.6% were related to rape, 2.6% were related to electronic blackmailing, 10.5% were related to family violence the rest were related to denying freedoms, running away after an imminent threat to their lives over inheritance and traveling without family's knowledge.

As for the geographical distribution, WCLAC noticed that 26.3% of the women were from Ramallah (10 women), 24.2% of the women were Jericho (8 women), 15.7% of the women were from Jerusalem (6 women), 13.1% were from Hebron (5 women), 10.5% were from Nablus (4 women), 5.2% were from Tulkarem and Qalqiliya (2 women each) and 2.6% were from Jenin (1 woman).

Professional interventions were facilitated in partnership with the Family Protection Unit at the Police, the Governorate and the Ministry of Social Development through carrying out 44 case conferences and meetings with families of women, and 6 meetings with the Coordination Committee for the Shelter in Palestine. These interventions resulted in returning 24 women to their families in better conditions with an emphasis on ensuring prevention of violence and preservation of their dignity. 10 women were referred to another shelter for extensive intervention and 4 women are still at the emergency shelter awaiting for suitable decisions during case conferences or meetings.

1.1.3. Develop capacities of service unit staff to provide better services to women victims of violence

Provide service unit staff with knowledge and skills required to provide social, legal, protection services and awareness activities to women

WCLAC views the personal and professional development of its lawyers and social workers as key to maintaining and developing the capacity of WCLAC's Service Unit to effectively respond to the needs of Palestinian women, improve service provisions for women suffering from gender-based discrimination across all the branches. In this reporting period, WCLAC provided 41 sessions, which included 9 sessions of collective supervision for 14 lawyers and social workers within the unit, 16 sessions of individual supervision, 8 social supervision sessions and 8 sessions of specialized supervision for social worker's to help them managing their cases. These sessions, with their unified approach, have helped to create an environment in which staff can work beneficially with female victims of violence, provide more specialised support to develop mechanisms supporting women and create appropriate intervention plans to meet the fundamental needs of women which comes in line with our experiences and capacities.

At the national level the Service's Unit team participated in trainings related to developing The National Observatory for documenting cases of GBV with the MOWA, which will be used by services' providers to feed in all cases. This will provide national figures on number and type of cases of GBV. The team also participated in the committee of preparing the indicators of GBV with the Palestinian Central Bureau of

Statistics to be used in the upcoming survey on domestic violence. Moreover, the team participated in a training with the Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPA) to advocate for safe abortion which focused on the legal aspect and included a media campaign, and building advocacy campaigns. Furthermore, WCLAC's lawyer participated in a training from UN Women on CEDAW and Islamic values and how to use them in women's rights.

1.2. Promote the level of social responsibility towards women's rights and eliminate discrimination against women

1.2.1. Increase awareness in local communities on the elimination of discrimination and violence against women

Carry out awareness raising initiatives for women to increase knowledge of their legal and social rights in five years (including East-Jerusalem)

WCLAC believes in the importance of awareness raising along with providing integrated guidance services. WCLAC has a long experience in raising awareness of different groups. The awareness raising sessions in the Services Unit has focused on raising women's awareness in their social and legal rights, as well as raising the awareness of professional services' providers in the Human Rights system, mechanisms, the social and legal rights of women to fill the knowledge gap between different segments of the society in rights, laws and to improve women's access to justice.

During the reporting period, WCLAC held **6** awareness raising sessions with **118** housewives in Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron. This year WCLAC targeted villages in area C since these areas are underserved due to the Israeli punitive measures and policies and the circumstances under which the women live are extremely difficult. With the aim of introducing WCLAC, its work, programs and services, the sessions also included presentations and discussions on international and local law with a particular focus on the concept and components of the marriage contract and the 'rights of the wife' in Personal Status Law, divorce, domestic violence, inheritance, and the Penal Code. In 2018, WCLAC implemented the sessions in Bittein and Beit-Ilo in Ramallah, Al-Tur in Jerusalem, Beit Surik in Northwest of Jerusalem, Al-Khader in Bethlehem and old city in Hebron.

As Area C is under Israeli administrative jurisdiction, it is unreachable to the PA services. WCLAC observed throughout the awareness raising sessions (basically in the introduction and the feedback) that the women are victims of patriarchal mentality and traditions especially when some women started sharing their sufferings while mentioning that they were exposed to violence from their family members, other women in the group indicated a coping/survival strategy of tolerance regarding the violence they're exposed to. WCLAC addressed this phenomenon with sensitivity in an effort to break the silence on the subject, raising questions about why women tended to tolerate violence against them and a discussion ensued with a consensus reached that in order to stop the violence and seek help. Beyond this, WCLAC offered information on all of the services available to the women to seek protection and justice and **29** one-off direct legal and social individual consultations took place in groups, increasing women's access to information on their rights and to legal aid.

WCLAC believes that working with other institutions and professionals will equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to design programs and messages that can contribute to social change. WCLAC offered a series of awareness-raising workshops by request of institutions that are working in the same field. Three workshops were developed in alignment with the needs of the institutions and their beneficiaries in Bethlehem, these workshops came along with the International Women's Day, the first one was with Women Media & Development/ TAM, the second was with Bethlehem Bible College as well as a Cultural Salon in Beit-Sahur to discuss Personal Status Law and women's situation.

1.2.2. Empower local communities to support and protect women's rights

Develop skills of university students on identifying and combating discrimination against women

In 2018, WCLAC carried out three training workshops for 95 university students around the West Bank and East- Jerusalem. WCLAC coordinated with Birzeit University in Ramallah, Al-Najah University in Nablus, and Al-Istiqlal University in Jericho to hold awareness-raising workshops with the title "Women's Rights, Human Rights". Students were very interested in the workshops and a high number of students registered. Each workshop in each university consisted of 3 training days except for Al-Najah University it took 4 working days and dealt with the following issues: discrimination against women in the Palestinian Penal Law and the Personal Status Law, family protection law, international conventions; especially CEDAW which Palestine acceded to without reservations.

The training sessions were facilitated by the Career Center in Annajah University in Nablus over four days; by the Law Faculty in Al-Istiqlal University in Jericho for three days during November 2018; and by the deanship of students' affairs in Birzeit University. 25 students participated in this training from Annajah University, 22 students from Al-Istiqlal University, and 30 students from Birzeit University, whom would apply the skills from this training to activism work on women's rights during 2019 by implementing initiatives in the West-Bank.

The training workshops aimed to raise awareness among students in Palestinian universities about women's rights within the framework of Palestinian legislation and international human rights instruments. Throughout the workshops, the trainers of WCLAC provided students with knowledge and facts on women's rights and gender issues in Palestine. The participants were also briefed on the challenges human rights organizations and women's organizations face during their work on defending the rights of Palestinian women with respect to legislation and practice, particularly with regard to the Personal Status Law and the Penal Code.

These workshops come in the context of the ongoing partnership between the Palestinian universities and the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling through a series of events aimed at introducing students and expanding their knowledge about women's rights. These workshops are part of WCLAC's legal and social awareness program that is implemented in cooperation with Palestinian universities. WCLAC continues to implement such activities due to the ongoing positive feedback, which is reflected in the evaluations, observations and recommendations from the students and the Deans' offices.

Groups of student focal points were selected from each university based on an evaluation that was distributed to participants, these focal points will be working on designing and implementing initiatives that advocate for women's rights in different communities in 2019.

Develop the skills of professionals, political and union activists on women's rights and advocating for their rights

During 2018 WCLAC conducted a training workshop over fifteen days for 10 women activists from the community level, to support active participation and role of Palestinian women in decision making at all levels of the society, especially in advancing a gender sensitive peace and security agenda. The women participants are politically active in their communities; they are members of the Palestinian Women General Union, employees of the Palestinian Alimony Fund, lawyers, and researchers. WCLAC aimed to strengthen the role of these women in advocating for National Plan on 1325 through designing advocacy campaign, methods of influencing policy and decision-making and use of different media outlets.



The participants were introduced to UNSCR 1325, its application in Palestine, in addition to an overview on the international treaties, UN mechanisms, documentation of Israeli violations to IHL, that directly affect Palestinian women, focusing on collecting testimonies and reporting. They were also introduced to stereotypes on women in the media, discrimination and the use social media in campaigning and advocacy. At this stage, the participants are expected to transfer their knowledge to other members of the organizations they work for, as well as community members to further advocate for women participation in the decision-making process and advancing gender sensitive security agenda and develop civic action plans.

Develop the skills of professionals on women's rights

During the reporting period, WCLAC carried out the workshop with a total of 18 participants for 5 days (a total of 30 training hours). 16.6% of the participants were males whereas 83.3% of them were females. The majority of the participants were social workers, lawyers, physiotherapists, and psychologists. Throughout the workshop, there was high level of commitment from the participants, as the majority requested to be part of the workshop, expressing their need for such workshops to develop their skills and knowledge about women's rights and working mechanisms with women victims of violence.

According to the pre and post questionnaire, it was noted that there was 100% increase in the knowledge of the participants. For most of the participants combining the legal and social aspects together was interesting and raised their knowledge in gender, CEDAW, alimony, custody, types of courts, legal and social mechanisms to help women victims of violence, and being introduced to the services that WCLAC provides; *"I always thought the Israeli Social Services are the ones who interfere in such cases, I am surprised that there is a Palestinian organization, which provides help for women victims of violence. I am*

pleased that I attended this training to learn more about the existence of such services”, a participant from Jerusalem said.

Carry out advocacy campaigns on agreed themes on International Women’s Day in coordination with partner organizations.

To mark the International Women’s Day on the 8th of March, WCLAC launched a campaign to abolish Article 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 of 1960, which is applicable in the West Bank. This article constitutes a flagrant violation of the rights of Palestinian women, which exempts the perpetrator of 13 types of sexual crimes from persecution in case of a valid marriage between the aggressor and the victim. WCLAC carried out this campaign in cooperation with the Coalition of Arab Women Parliamentarians, where WCLAC prepared and issued a study on the obligations of abolishing this article and 500 copies were printed in Arabic. The study was prepared by the judge Ahmad Al-Ashkar, in which he discussed the article, the context of the experiment, pointing out that according to article, the marriage of the victim expropriates/ seizes the right of the State of punishing the offender, where it encourages the crime arguing such marriage is invalid, because the main condition which is consent of the marriage is not satisfied.

As a result of this movement, President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree to abolish Article 308 and its applications on the ground. Therefore, the perpetrator will be punished as a result of his criminal behaviour/ act – in sexual offenses as stipulated in Part VII of the Penal Code regardless of marrying the victim or not. A number of WCLAC’s staff participated in more than one interview, both radio and television, on article 308.

Additional celebrations were attended and cooperated on by WCLAC. Within the international one-week women’s campaign (1-8 March), international development partners in Jerusalem and WCLAC launched on Thursday 1st March the joint “she leads the way” campaign to celebrate the 2018 International Women’s Day (8 March). During this week, a variety of activities were carried out across the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. WCLAC was part of the British Consulate and UN Women’s closing ceremony of “She Leads the Way”, a joint event of musical and dance performances took place, as well as TED-style talks from inspirational Palestinian women. The evening event was attended by a wide variety of international audiences, mainly women. All the revenues of the ceremony went to Women’s Center in Shu’fat refugee camp.

16 Days of Activism against Gender- Based Violence

On December 6th, WCLAC implemented a workshop on "Legal Criminal protection of women. "Between Public and Private Laws" as part of its contribution to the international campaign 16 days of activism to combat violence against women, around 20 people from different organizations attended the workshop, in which WCLAC aimed at strengthening partnerships between women's organizations and human rights organizations working on combating violence against women. The workshop discussed the legal framework of the criminal protection of women victims of domestic and social violence by highlighting the draft penal code as a general law, and the draft of the family protection law as a special law. It also highlighted the social and legal urgency for issuing such laws in a way that protects women from violence and provides them with full access to justice.

In December, WCLAC implemented a discussion workshop targeting political parties, this workshop was organized in cooperation with the Palestinian Forum to Combat Violence against Women (Al-Muntada) to follow up the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee on the harmonization of the national legislation in accordance with the Convention, especially the Personal Status Laws and Penal Code. The workshop was attended by representatives of political; especially from democratic elements, women leaders, lawyers and activists, and PLC members.

This workshop coincided with recent developments related to the incitement speech against women and the attempts of the Palestinian executive authority to evade its legal responsibilities vis-à-vis international human rights conventions through recent attempts towards the imposition of reservations to international human rights conventions to which Palestine acceded to in 2014, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It was agreed to form a joint committee within the National Coalition on Personal Status Laws to work towards the adoption of a civil Palestinian Personal Status Law and amendments in the penal code were demanded, that ensures equality and justice for all Palestinians, and ensure women's access to justice.

Furthermore, WCLAC's volunteers especially in Tubas governorate conducted a small play about killing women under the pretext of the so-called family honor. This play was presented and accompanied by WCLAC's lawyer and social worker in Qalqiliya, Tulkarm and Tubas, where more than 100 women participated in these governorates. After the play, WCLAC's team (lawyer and social worker) discussed the law of Family Protection against violence and its importance to reduce the number of killings against women, protect them and the impact of killing on the family and community.

Participate in national landmark events

In June, WCLAC participated in an event for the Human Rights Defenders that was organized by the Representative Office of Switzerland in Ramallah with the Swiss Development and Cooperation Office in Jerusalem, the Representative Office of Norway to the Palestinian Authority and the Office of the EU Representative. The event aimed to honour the 70th anniversary of the Universal declaration of Human Rights as well as the 20th anniversary of the UN declaration on Human Rights Defenders. WCLAC, shed the light on the context of fighting for Palestinian women's rights within deeply patriarchal structures and the challenges women advocates face when working with others on Palestinian rights. The double oppression that Palestinians face both from Israel and from the Palestinian Authority was also discussed together with the role of human rights defenders and the international community to advocate for human rights and women's rights in the oPt.

Furthermore, WCLAC took part in a joint activity with several women's rights organizations and activists during the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women & Girls in Palestine. The activity was organized by the Palestinian Forum to Combat Violence against Women (Al-Muntada) to demand amendments on laws that discriminate against women, such as the Penal Code, the Personal Status Law, and the Family Protection Law. On December 5th WCLAC and other organizations went out in a peaceful protest in Ramallah demanding women's rights protection and imposing the harshest sanctions on those who violate the rights of women.

Moreover, the volunteers held an activity in the village of Jabara in Tulkarem, which was mainly a reflection session in addition to an awareness workshop about the Labour Law and the rights guaranteed by the law for working women. One of the participants in the meeting talked about her experience and her right to represent women in the local council. Finally, the volunteers held an awareness session for women in the Aqaba-Tubas area. Initially, the volunteers introduced WCLAC and the services it provides for women. Afterwards, the violations committed by the Israeli occupation against women in the area were discussed in addition to the harassment practiced in the area since it is considered a semi-closed training area for the Israeli military where the lives of people are exposed to danger.

1.3 Develop capacities of community activists and grassroots women's organisations working on women protection and advocate for their rights

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

Since 2005 WCLAC has worked with grassroots organizations in marginalized communities and remote areas of the West Bank in order to improve their capacity to defend Palestinian women's rights and to spread an awareness of the services available to them, should they require legal assistance or social counselling. As well as providing training and awareness-raising sessions for numerous organisations, WCLAC also has institutional partnerships with three grassroots women's organisations in less well-served parts of the West Bank. WCLAC supervises the legal and social service provision delivered by these partners to women in their communities, while at the same time building their organisational capacity to improve the quality and resilience of independent service providers.

Continue developing the capacity of service provision staff at Jericho Women's Charitable Society (JWCS)

WCLAC has been following up on the quality of the work and the progression of implementing the work plan with grassroots organisations. This has been done through the following mechanisms:

WCLAC works in partnership with JWCS association in order to continuously facilitate the various services and legal and social counselling they provide to women. In 2018, JWCS assisted 146 women. 46 women received social-legal services, 20 received social services, ten received legal services, and 70 received social-legal counselling. Additionally, JWCS provided representation in court for 57 cases, 30 of which were ruled in favour of the woman, four were assisted in implementing court decisions and the rest still pending.

The geographical distribution of beneficiaries seeking services from JWCS is 56 women from villages, 36 women from cities, and 20 from refugee camps. A majority of the cases are women being deprived of alimony, whilst the remainder cover custody issues, divorce, and dowry, physical and sexual violence.

Regarding awareness-raising, lawyers and social workers arranged 42 meetings in the Jericho governorate reaching Al-Aghwar and its neighbouring areas such as Auja, Aqabat Jabr, Ayn al-Sultan, and Jiftlik to discuss several topics of concern. Issues that were raised revolved around alimony, personal status law, family violence, early marriage, protection, divorce, pre-marital counselling, mechanisms in working with abused women, sexual assault, conflict and disagreements, and exploitation of women. These meetings

reached about 621 participants who were housewives, students from schools and universities from the city, villages, and camps in the Jericho governorate. One of the most important outcomes of the meetings was raising awareness of women's rights and the access to services, providing counselling to a number of women, referring a number of cases to further services from JWCS. A number of women reported feeling more empowered from knowing how to access their rights.

Specialized Supervision

WCLAC provided five supervision sessions to social workers and lawyers at the CBOS aiming at increasing their interventions with targeted women. 16 supervision sessions (11 individual and 5 collective) with a total of 48 hours were carried out and intervention plans were discussed and designed by both lawyers and social workers to discuss and analyse socio-legal cases, court procedure to ensure support for women to access their rights. Furthermore, the team discussed issues related to managing individual sessions as well as appropriate actions or measures when a beneficiary rejects social intervention and communication with the specialist, finally they discussed awareness raising sessions and the possibility of having a unified training toolkit.



Develop mobile counselling service in Jericho partner organization

In 2018, the specialized team from WCLAC and JWCS conducted 71 visits to 5 remote and marginalized local communities in order to provide services for the women in these areas. The mobile clinics operates in 5 marginalized communities near Jericho; one in the area of Jiftlek, Alfasayel, Al Dyouk Al-Fouqa, Al-Noie'meh and Al Ouja. During this reporting period, the team provided 7 one-off consultations for women on domestic violence. Finally, people in Al-Ouja and Jiftlek requested for awareness raising sessions for school students.

Capacity building of CBOs' administrative and financial procedures

WCLAC continued its comprehensive support to partner CBOs through on-going meetings with staff members and management. Eight programmatic meetings were implemented with JWCS and attended by 9 staff members and management. Additionally, another financial follow-up meeting was held revolving around financial support, review budget and action plan for 2018, follow up on activities and program's implementation, feedback on financial statements and upgrade the financial managerial files in addition to a capacity building plan for staff members, and employment mechanisms.

Developing the capacity of CBOs to build relationships with the local community and donors

This Year, WCLAC provided a training of 25 hours for 10 WCLAC has been aiming to establish good foundations in institution-donor relations and in fundraising. A number of project proposals were reviewed for grassroots institutions through analysis of the problem, defining project objectives, methods of intervention, proposals writing, how to build relations with donors, commitment and accountability action plan and budget. As a result, the training helped JWCS to develop written materials about the Society and a proposal.

Building the capacity of CBOs in Jerusalem

For the reporting period, WCLAC held 6 meetings with the Women Center Al-Thawri Silwan. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss the planned activities(15 community awareness raising sessions), the themes of the awareness raising sessions as well as determine the target groups we want to work with. It was agreed that the topics of the awareness raising sessions will be selected based on the needs of the groups of the local community.

Meanwhile, WCLAC supported Al-Thwri Women's Centre in implementing 15 awareness raising sessions for 184 participants (15.58% were males). The sessions focused on Parental guidance on correct formation of kids, violence against women, women's rights, dangers of internet, parent's behaviour with teenagers, children's rights. The sessions focused on skills for parents to communicate with their children, correct formation and discipline for kids, types of violence, as for the children the sessions focused mechanisms to better deal with problems rather than using violence, skills in making decisions related to women's lives. There was high level of interactivity while discussing the dangers of internet, as it is a very important topic for women and mothers, in addition to the session on women's rights for children aged between 8-13 years old, some children expressed that they didn't know that there are rights, in which they played different gender roles.

Create and develop a new social and legal service provision program in the Hebron partner organization

WCLAC established and created a new partner grassroots organization in the South of Hebron governorate in Dura area by signing MoU with "Nahdet Bint Al Reef" for two years. WCLAC chose this organisation as it covers the areas of Dora and it has presence in 45 villages, showing the high level of trust that "Nahdet Bint Al-Reef" has with the local community. During the first half of this year, WCLAC assisted Nahdet Bint Al-Reef in hired the working staff: 2 social workers, 2 lawyers, accountant and public relations officer. WCLAC started building the capacity of the staff to provide quality services to women victims of violence. Moreover, WCLAC conducted 8 follow-up meetings with staff members, and general assembly.

WCLAC held 10 collective supervision meetings with 4 lawyers and social workers consisting of 30 hours. These supervision sessions mainly dealt with lawyers and social workers code of conduct at work, creating safe space for the beneficiaries, challenges that staff might face at the beginning of their work, reporting standards, and examples of cases and the best options of interventions. WCLAC also held 12 operational training sessions consisting of 60 training hours for NBRCS 4 staff members, and a 5-day workshop consisting of 30 hours for 12 NBRCS staff members on Palestinian culture, sensitivities, dealing with patriarchal norms and its impact on GBV. The workshop trained the NBRCS staff on the different approaches that they would need for inventions and for supporting women with their different cases. In addition to that, WCLAC provided a study day for all three grassroots for exchanging experiences and networking was also held during this year. Important discussions took place among grassroots about the different types of cases they receive as the locations and communities that they work with differ.

Continue developing the capacity of service provision staff at Nahdet Bint Al Reef Charitable Society (NBRCS)

WCLAC has been following up on the quality of the work and the progression of implementing the work plan with grassroots organisations. This has been done through the following mechanisms:

WCLAC works in partnership with NBRCS association in order to continuously facilitate the various services and legal and social counselling they provide to women. In 2018, NBRCS assisted 144 women. 20 women received social-legal services, 18 received social services, five received legal services, and 101 received social-legal counselling. Additionally, NBRCS provided representation in court for 28 cases, 11 of which were ruled in favour of the women and the rest still pending. The geographical distribution of beneficiaries seeking services from NBRCS is 75 women from villages, 44 women from cities, and 25 from refugee camps. A majority of the cases are women being deprived of rights either from the family or the husband especially dowry, alimony, whilst the remainder cover custody issues, divorce, physical and sexual violence.

Regarding awareness-raising, legal and social workers conducted 39 sessions in the Hebron governorate reaching Dura and its neighbouring areas such as Kbeit Al-Rush Alrihieh, Imreish, Al-Samou' and Al-Fawar refugee camp to discuss several topics of concern. Issues that were raised revolved around alimony, personal status law, family violence, early marriage, protection, divorce, pre-marital counselling, mechanisms in working with abused women, sexual assault, conflict and disagreements, and exploitation of women. These meetings reached about 660 participants who were housewives.

Strategic goal 2: Promote women's rights to access justice and eliminate discriminatory policies against women

2.1. Contribute to the development of laws, policies and procedures to eliminate discrimination against women

2.1.1. Amendment of laws and policies in line with CEDAW

Contribute to preparing CEDAW shadow report to the PA and submit it to the PA and submit it to the CEDAW special Committee

WCLAC submitted the CEDAW [shadow report](#) on Palestine on the 8th of June. This report was prepared in collaboration with Human Rights Watch and Equality Now. The report also responds to the list of issues raised by the Committee at the Pre-sessional Meeting last November as well as the response of the State of Palestine to the list of issues, to highlight the gaps in the official report of the State of Palestine. The issues that WCLAC raised were related to article 16, included: the Personal Status Law applied in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Muslims and Christians and the discrimination it entails against women especially in marriage, divorce, children custody, guardianship, child marriage, women's marital financial rights and inheritance. It also addressed how the applied Islamic Personal Status Law allows a man to have multiple wives whereas a woman cannot marry without the consent of her guardian. WCLAC also discussed divorce in the Christian family law which is mostly impossible, expensive and takes many years. WCLAC also focused on violations related to the age of marriage. At the mean-time there is a gap in the age marriage

between Gaza strip and West bank, in the West Bank the minimum age for marriage for females is 14.5 years and 15.5 years for males, however in Gaza Strip, the minimum age for marriage for females is 17 years and 18 years for males.

Follow up on the ratification and implementation of the Family Protection Law

During 2018, WCLAC followed up on the developments of the Family Protection Law, especially that a law's draft was passed by the General Prosecutor's office was different than the draft discussed with civil society organizations and the national committee that has been working on drafting the law. WCLAC demanded through its work for civil society organizations' engagement in discussions and meetings related to drafting the Family Protection Law, especially human rights and women's rights organizations. WCLAC worked on reviewing the Family Protection Law's draft in which it noticed the exclusion of the CSOs in the drafting process including women's rights organizations. WCLAC has been emphasizing on the importance of the enactment of Family Protection Law that protects women and prevents violence against them.

As a result of the campaign held by PNGO that aimed to engage CSOs and human rights organizations in the policy making process, a national committee was formed to discuss the first draft of the family protection law which was prepared by a national team that included governmental and non-governmental institutions. Three meetings were held in MOWA's office to discuss the law's draft, WCLAC was a member of this committee as the only women's rights organization participating. The reviewed draft was submitted to the Palestinian cabinet to prepare a final draft that includes the committee's comments and feedback.

The draft was approved by the Palestinian Cabinet in December 2018 and sent to the President for final endorsement to be published in the Official Gazette. In order to accelerate this process Al-Montada for Combating Violence against Women, which is an umbrella of 17 different women organizations has led a national campaign calling for the enactment of the Family Protection Law.

Follow up on the enactment of the Family Status Law

In September, WCLAC in partnership with the GUPW (General Union of Palestinian Women) conducted a national workshop that aimed at reactivating the coalition on the Personal Status Law in Palestine. A thorough discussion of a policy paper that WCLAC prepared on Legal reforms concerning the implemented Personal Status Laws in Palestine. The policy paper presented suggestion on the Personal Status Law that all Palestinians seek to ensure equality regardless of sex or religion. More than 50 representatives from different women, human rights, and international organizations attended the workshop.

The workshop presented the situation of Palestinian women in the current social, economic, political and legal contexts, and presented the history of women's movement in fighting against discrimination and their efforts to influence legal reforms. This workshop was held to call for ensuring dignity and justice for all Palestinian women. The importance of reactivating the coalition on Personal Status Laws in Palestine has increased after the PA's accession to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) in 2014, which demands the Palestinian legislator to align the national laws and regulations to the international treaties and conventions.

On December 27th, WCLAC conducted an interactive session on Personal Status Law in cooperation with the Palestinian Forum to Combat Violence Against Women (Al-Muntada) aimed at mobilizing political parties to engage in advocacy efforts to enact a modern Personal Status Law for all Palestinians. This workshop coincided with recent developments related to the incitement speech against women and the attempts of the Palestinian executive authority to evade its legal responsibilities vis-à-vis international human rights conventions through recent attempts towards the imposition of reservations to international human rights conventions to which Palestine acceded to in 2014, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The brainstorming session attended by political parties, women's organizations and democratic elements within the Palestinian society agreed on a joint committee to work towards adopting a civil Palestinian Personal Status Law that ensures equality and justice for all Palestinians.

Review and follow up on the approval of the Social Security Law

During 2018, WCLAC prepared a [report](#) on the latest draft of the social security law, in which it highlighted articles of law that violate Palestinian women's rights from a gender perspective. In this report other international treaties and conventions and other Arabic laws related to social security were reviewed. It also highlighted the gaps of the social security law with reference to the Palestinian Basic Law and labor law.

2.1.2. Shed light on policies, laws and practices in place that deal with femicide and sexual violence

Document cases of femicide and sexual violence and prepare analytical report

WCLAC carries out ongoing documentation of VAW - cases of femicide especially - in order to collate a strong body of data on which to base our advocacy strategies in lobbying for gender-sensitive legislative reform. A sound argument, grounded in facts, can also be used to pressure the government into taking concrete steps in order to amend legislation towards protecting women from violence. It should be noted the structural violence inherent in the unequal balance of power relations between the perpetrator and the victim which is reproduced in social life. As a rule, WCLAC investigates all deaths of women and girls in the OPT, excluding those caused by the Israeli force. WCLAC continues to be a reliable resource in documenting cases of femicide and incest in Palestine.

In 2018, WCLAC monitored and documented a total of 23 cases in West-Bank and Gaza, (**ten** women were killed in Gaza Strip and **13** women were killed in the West Bank.) the women aged between 14- 48 years old through the field workers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A large number of local and international organizations usually request ongoing updates on numbers of femicide cases because WCLAC is the only organisation documenting those cases. WCLAC also issues analysis reports every two years through providing evidence based data to influence decision makers to perform legal reform and adopt non-discriminatory laws.

2.2 Advocate for women's rights at the international, regional and local levels

2.2.1 Engagement in active networks and coalitions to support women's rights

WCLAC works within networks and coalitions to target national, regional and international decision-makers in order to affect essential legal and policy changes for women in Palestine. Coalitions are comprised of civil society actors, representatives from governmental bodies, members of political parties and other decision-makers. WCLAC also incorporates representatives from its volunteer clusters into the coalitions, thereby bringing the voice of the Palestinian community to the decision-making level. Participation, in turn, empowers volunteers with invaluable advocacy skills. WCLAC is a member in numerous local and international coalitions and networks including: 1) *The National Committee for Women's Labour and a commitment in a periodic meetings*, 2) *NGO Forum on Violence Against Women (Al Muntada)*, 3) *SALMA Network against violence against women in the Arab world*, 4) *AISHA Network (Arab Women's Forum)*, 5) *Arab Network for Monitoring and Changing the Image of Women and Men in Media (ANMCWM)*, 6) *Musawa Coalition (Equality without Reservations)*, 7) *Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and the Gender Working Group*, 8) *National Committee to Combat Violence Against Women*, 9) *Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship Education (ANHRE) Network*, 10) *National Committee of the Palestinian National Coalition on UN Resolution 1325*, 11) *Media and Rights Coalition to Ensure Implementation of Courts Decisions*, 12) *The Coalition on women with disability*, 13) *The Palestinian coalition on social, economic, and cultural rights (ADALA)*, 14) *Women Employment committee*, 15) *PNGO-Network*.

During this reporting period, WCLAC participated in a Training Program on Gender Statistics which aims to increase the knowledge on how to compile, analyze, disseminate and communicate gender statistics in a user friendly way.

As an active member of the **Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network**, WCLAC has participated in the periodic meeting of the Network in April where Human Rights updates were shared among the members and a special emphasis was given to the adopted criminal protection laws in each country, as well as the application of Council of Europe against Domestic Violence "Istanbul Convention", in terms of raising awareness of its importance and the adequacy of the domestic laws and legislations of each country with the Convention. Furthermore, focus was also given to evaluate the previous strategic plan of the Gender and Gender Working Group.

WCLAC has also been part of the discussion meetings on the strategic plan for the **gender group within the Euro-Med** and the future strategic plan for the Euro-Med Network.

WCLAC also continued to be an effective member of the **Higher Committee on UNSCR1325**, which was formulated based on a Cabinet decision and responsible for following up the National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR1325. It is also an effective member of the **National Coalition on UNSCR1325**, which consists of representatives of CSOs and aims to engage civil society organizations in implementation of the NAP. In January, WCLAC participated in reviewing and developing a specialized strategic plan of the **National Women's Coalition on UNSCR1325** to align it with the current political challenges.

WCLAC participated in the meeting of the **Non-Governmental Women Coalition for the Implementation of CEDAW** in occupied State of Palestine. The meeting aimed at discussing the action plan of the coalition regarding CEDAE, the implementation of the convention especially after considering shadow report

submitted by GUPW and next steps regarding developing the upcoming shadow report especially that the PA will present its report in July 10th.

WCLAC also play active role in the **Committee on Minimum Wage** to ensure having fair and equal wages for women. This Committee plays a significant role to affect labour policies and influence Ministry of Labour to modify employment policies in accordance with international conventions Palestine acceded. This year, the meeting was held to develop the work of the committee, increase the pressure on the government to implement and adopt more just laws, WCLAC highlighted the violations against women in work places in addition to the unemployment rate and lack of working opportunities.

2.4. Improve women's position in the media and combat negative attitudes against them

2.4.1 Follow-up, document and analyse women's image in the media from a gender perspective

In March 2018, WCLAC contributed to the edition of This Week in Palestine Magazine, by writing an article on Economic Independence: [A Prerequisite for the Social and Political Participation of Palestinian women](#). Moreover, WCLAC contributed to the March's edition of Filistin Ashabab (Palestine's Youth) Magazine, by writing two articles in Arabic on the [Role of Civil Society Organizations in Combating Violence against Women](#) as well as [Criminal Protection for Palestinian Women: Reality and Application](#).

Develop the Arabic and English website

During the reporting period, WCLAC has managed to update its website and Facebook pages. As for the website, WCLAC has new programming for its website to become user friendly. As for the Facebook, the updates included different WCLAC activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, follow up on the advocacy work, coverage of the abolishment of article 308 in the Penal code developments, TV interviews with WCLAC general director and employees, articles written by WCLAC employees and different laws and news on women's issues.

2.5. Empower youth networks of defence and advocate for women's rights

2.5.1 Expand the network of volunteers to advocate and mainstream women's rights in their communities.

WCLAC believes that meaningful change in favour of women's rights begins at the grassroots level. For this reason, WCLAC works with volunteer clusters to advocate for legal and policy reform and to grow an awareness of women's rights in underserved and marginalised communities throughout the West Bank. Volunteer mobilisation also empowers women (as well as men who support women's rights) with skills to develop their capacities, self-esteem, social status and voice in the public sphere. WCLAC supports teams of volunteers working in 4 locations to promote women's rights across the West Bank. Volunteers – a mix of male and female young professionals, typically fresh graduates or university students – are handed with knowledge and information to organise and lead awareness-raising and advocacy events on women's rights in their local communities that contribute to the economic, legal, social and political empowerment

of women and enable them to exchange experiences. These activities usually include information-sharing workshops on women's rights and gender issues, educational and recreational activities, and cultural events.

Through this network of volunteers, WCLAC is able to extend its reach, bringing its vision to conservative isolated, hard-to-reach locations. WCLAC also believes in the importance of targeting male volunteers in its programmes, and indeed the number of male volunteers forms almost half of our total number of volunteers. WCLAC volunteers are highly committed and dedicated to furthering the vision and message of WCLAC. In 2018, WCLAC has formed four new volunteer groups one in each of the following governorates: Tubas, Tulkarem, Hebron and Qalqilia, The 4 volunteer groups consist of 80 (53 females and 27 males) volunteers.

During the reporting period, WCLAC delivered supervision to volunteers in the four locations over 24 periodic meetings through which volunteer work plans were developed. It was agreed with the volunteers that the nomination of 24 volunteers to lead activities will be based on commitment, and effectiveness in the program criteria. Furthermore, WCLAC continued to support the volunteers as two female volunteers were trained in local community organizations in their respective regions. The importance of this activity lies in providing the volunteers with professional and practical experience. WCLAC met with the volunteer groups in Hebron, Qalqilya, Tubas and Tulkarem and discussed their annual plan and introduced the expected goals. Discussions on women issues, forms of GBV, reality of Palestinian women were a core part of the meetings. WCLAC equipped the volunteers with analytical skills and capabilities that would enable them to advocate for women's rights and create positive change in their communities.

WCLAC held one central workshop to build volunteers interpersonal and facilitation skills (consisting of 24 hours) 20 participant between the ages of 20-30 years old took part in this training. The training focused on developing participants' skills in planning, organizing, coordinating and networking, facilitating community initiatives, enhancing their ability to recruit the necessary community resources, developing participants' capacities for leadership skills, and using multiple methodologies in training. The main tools that were used in the training were interactive which included lecture, discussion and brainstorming, group work, play, motivational stories and inspirational models, visual presentations and role play. After the training and as agreed 23 volunteers were selected to lead the implementation of the 4 initiatives in their communities.

The group implemented 4 initiatives targeting 218 women aged between 35-50 years old as well as 23 males. The initiatives aimed at raising women's awareness in GBV & their legal rights in addition to raising women's awareness in their health rights especially in Cancer this was achieved with the help and cooperation of local organisations in Both Tulkarem (Saida and Kufor Aboush villages) and Hebron (Al – Aroub refugee camp). It should be mentioned that the idea of free medical examination days for women came out in conjunction with the awareness sessions by volunteers, as they have realised the need of accessing health services especially for women to encourage them in benefiting from these services. It was noticed that awareness sessions empower women to undertake medical examinations especially that women in these areas are not able to pay great attention to health care and periodic medical examinations. In Tubas, the initiative was carried out in the villages of Al-Tayaseer and Al-Aqaba, both villages have a high rate related to disability, thus the volunteers chose these areas and targeted mothers

and children with disability focusing on raising their awareness in the concept of violence, its forms, its impact on people with disabilities especially women, and the law for protecting people with disabilities, especially women, and the privileges granted by MOSD, as well as women's rights and the challenges they face in society. The fourth was carried out at Qalqilia in which the volunteers targeted an orphanage based on a needs assessment, the activities varied, for instance through playing, awareness was raised about family violence and its impact. The activities also included voluntary work in which the orphanage's garden was cleaned and planted with roses. Finally, simple gifts such as school stationary were distributed.

This year WCLAC worked on integrating 4 of its volunteers (they were all females) in other organisations to gain practical experience and discuss women's related issues there. These volunteers had the opportunity to participate in their Local Councils and share what they have gained from WCLAC with their peers and institution. Furthermore, 65 volunteers (14 males, 51 females) participated in 4 meeting with women leaders from their governorates. WCLAC made sure that the experiences were close to volunteers' reality by identifying the challenges and difficulties that these women faced from the community and how to overcome such obstacles.

2.6. Document Israeli human rights violations against Palestinian women and develop effective tools to present them.

2.6.1 Highlight the gender-specific impact of human rights violations on Palestinian women

During the period, WCLAC collected 115 testimonies from Palestinian women in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, posted 115 [voices](#) on the website; the violations mainly focused on minors' house arrest, property or house demolitions, punitive measures, residency revocations, violations against women during visits to prisoners, violations of women in marginalized areas especially in Hebron, violations against women during the great return Marches in Gaza and the right to health. It should be mentioned that 35.6% of the voices focused on the violations that Jerusalemite women face.

Moreover, in 2018 WCLAC issued 12 monthly [Bulletins](#), and lodged 3 [submissions](#), the first is a UN [submission](#) on "Health in the Gaza Strip and its Impact on Women Living There" which is primarily based on testimonies from women collected around Gaza Strip detailing the impact of Israeli activities on their access to health services and livelihoods, the other submission was for The Commission Of Inquiry on the 2018 protests in Gaza and the gendered impact of the excessive use of force by Israeli occupation forces on women civilians, who participated in the return marches, Finally WCLAC lodged a joint submission with Human Rights Watch .

WCLAC participated both as an independent NGO and as a part of the official Palestinian delegation in the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CWS62) that took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from the 13th to the 24th of 2018.

WCLAC has also conducted two advocacy trips abroad; one took place in the Netherlands and Geneva in March 2017 at the Human Rights Council 34th session, and the second trip took place in Geneva in June 2017 at the 35th Human Rights Council.

WCLAC's English language [website](#) continued to be active and regularly updated with new and original materials.

2.6.2 Rally International support for Palestinian women among governments, parliaments and Civil Society

During the reporting period a total of 59 presentations and meetings with delegations visiting Palestine were achieved. The delegations comprised parliamentarians, diplomats, journalists, and civil society activists to present evidence of human rights violations under occupation. Most of the meetings were held to exchange information and the latest developments from our respective organizations and see what opportunities we might have to work especially on the Family Protection Law, which included highlighting HR situations in OPT with focus on Jerusalem and the Gendered occupation on Women's Human Right, discussing UN resolution 1325, Women Peace & Security and the impact of Israeli HR & IHL Violations on Palestinian Women focused on Women in Jerusalem.

This year WCLAC has also conducted 4 advocacy trips abroad to USA, Geneva and Brussels. The first advocacy trip was in March 2018 to Geneva at the Human Rights Council 37th session, in which WCLAC presented an oral statement condemning continuous Israeli occupation discriminatory policies against Palestinian women in East Jerusalem mentioning residency revocation and collective punishment against Palestinians.

The second one was in July to participate in the 70th session of CEDAW Committee in which it reviewed the initial report of Palestine and WCLAC presented an [oral statement](#) that focused primarily on violence against women within the family and article 16 of CEDAW summarizing the violations related to this article, to be taken into account when making recommendations to the State of Palestine. WCLAC and numerous other NGOs further highlighted gaps in the initial report and the Palestinian response to the CEDAW [list of issues](#) after the 68th CEDAW pre-session on Palestine. The issues that WCLAC raised in the oral statement and discussion relating to article 16, included: the Personal Status Law applied in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Muslims and Christians and the discrimination it entails against women especially in marriage, divorce, children custody, guardianship, child marriage, women's marital financial rights and inheritance. It also addressed how the applied Islamic Personal Status Law allows a man to have multiple wives whereas a woman cannot marry without the consent of her guardian. Furthermore, WCLAC discussed divorce in the Christian family law which is mostly impossible, expensive and takes many years. WCLAC also focused on violations related to the age of marriage. At the mean-time there is a gap in the age marriage between Gaza strip and West bank, in the West Bank the minimum age for marriage for females is 14.5 years and 15.5 years for males, however in Gaza Strip, the minimum age for marriage for females is 17 years and 18 years for males.

It should be mentioned that WCLAC submitted the CEDAW [shadow report](#) on Palestine on the 8th of June. This report was prepared in collaboration with Human Rights Watch and Equality Now. The report also responds to the list of issues raised by the Committee at the Pre-sessional Meeting last November as well as the response of the State of Palestine to the list of issues, to highlight the gaps in the official report of the State of Palestine.

The third trip was in September to attend the Human Rights Council 39th session in which WCLAC delivered an oral statement highlighting the gendered impact of the Israeli occupation and focused on the Israeli occupation violations committed against Palestinian women who did not pose any imminent threat to the

life of others during the return marches. Moreover, in the oral statement WCLAC invited to commission of inquiry to give a special attention to the gendered component towards the direct and indirect impact of the Israeli violations against Palestinian women⁴⁸.

The fourth advocacy trip was in New York on October 2018 where WCLAC participated in the 18th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. WCLAC's General Director Randa Siniora presented a [Statement](#) at the United Nation's Security Council in New-York. This statement was made on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on "Women and peace and security." The statement highlighted the gendered impact of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, bringing the voices of Palestinian women, who still face violence, discrimination, deprivation and systematic violations of their human rights on a daily basis. Later on WCLAC's advocacy team leader participated as a panelist in an event that aimed to explore the challenges to the participation of young women and adolescent girls in the development and implementation of sustainable peace efforts, particularly conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies in non-formal and informal spaces. WCLAC delivered a [statement](#), describing the multiple repression young women face in Palestine caused by the Israeli Occupation, the patriarchal structure, and the discriminatory laws against women.

2.7 Work towards holding Israel accountable for human rights violations

2.7.1 Use UN mechanisms to hold Israel accountable to its violations under IHL

In June 28th, WCLAC presented two reports to Special Rapporteur Mr. S. Michael Lynk in Amman. The two reports highlighted the impact of Israeli violation to Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in H2 Area in Hebron and East Jerusalem on lives of Palestinian women. These reports were based on first hand data collected from women themselves live in these areas. WCLAC emphasized the direct indirect impact of Israeli occupation on women's access to services, access to education, gender based violence, and public participation in H2 area in Hebron. Specific focus on women in Jerusalem was highlighted in the second report that was based on testimonies collected from women impact of minor house arrest, house demolition, punitive measure and residency revocation on them as mothers and individuals. The Special Rapporteur expressed his interest in the gender analysis presented by WCLAC promising to allocate specific section in his upcoming report in October to present analysis and recommendations mentioned in the reports. He also requested further analysis and testimonies to be sent by August to strengthen analysis and findings to be considered in his report.

Attend CSW sessions and parallel events

This year, WCLAC participated both as an independent NGO and as a part of the official Palestinian delegation, in the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) and. The session took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, from the 12th to the 23th of March 2018. The main theme of the session was Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment

⁴⁸ Link to the oral statement: <http://webtv.un.org/search/item7-general-debate-29th-meeting-39th-regular-session-human-rights-council-/5839313315001/?term=&lan=english&page=4#player>

of rural women and girls.” WCLAC aimed through its participation in the CSW’s 62nd session to shed the light on night raids and arrest in attempt to arrest family members and its effect on women, the effects of settlements and the settlement expansion policy on daily lives of Palestinian women, property destruction, demolition, and the lack of adequate housing, targeting women human rights defenders, women journalists and activists, forcible eviction of Palestinians from occupied Jerusalem and collective punishment as a tool in forcible transfer and targeting of civilians. On March 16th, the Women’s Center for Legal Aid and Counselling organized a parallel event in the UN building in New York in cooperation with the Palestinian Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Other Palestinian CSOs were part of this event, which is entitled “Palestinian Women Under Israeli Occupation: The Gendered Impact of Occupation”. More than 70 persons attended the event and were engaged in the discussion that followed the presentations, WCLAC briefed them on the different violations that Palestinian women face especially in Jerusalem, including restriction of movements, residency revocation, home demolitions, child arrest, and night raids. Special focus was given to the situation of Jerusalemite women who face numerous challenges caused by the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation, especially restrictions on movement, home demolitions and forcible transfer.

2.8 Empower Palestinian women and provide them with opportunities to communicate their own messages and to express themselves to the outside world

2.8.1 Enable Palestinian women in Area C and near the wall to communicate their stories with international delegations

In 2018 the fieldwork coached **3** women. All participants have suffered from different types of violations committed by Israeli forces, such as night raids, children arrest, Minors House arrest and the loss of their beloved ones. By the end of the Year these women were able to share their stories with three different delegations. To achieve this, WCLAC held 7 meetings with the 3 women, the meetings were divided on a period of 12 months, depending on their availability. Meetings are usually conducted at WCLAC office. The main aim of the coaching sessions is to train women to talk about their stories and cases of violations of their human rights by Israel in different international events either locally or internationally, and to present their suffering as women living in Jerusalem in front of delegations and in any required activity for WCLAC. However, these coaching sessions will also work as a raising awareness sessions in different human rights and IHL areas.

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

3.1. Develop WCLAC policies and procedures

3.1.1 Improve WCLAC policies, procedures and practices

Draft new policies and procedures

conducted an initial review of the Centre's salary scale policy to ensure the development of an applicable policy that satisfies the needs and aspirations of the staff, 3 drafts were provided to the Board of Director's, the board developed a committee to review the drafts and decide the most applicable one. Moreover, WCLAC drafted a complain mechanism which will be implemented to cover internal and external complaints. This means that complaints could be processed from clients, staff, partners and stakeholders. WCLAC will work to finalize this mechanism along with its new strategic plan.

3.1.2 Enhance WCLAC's programme and information management system

Undertake evaluations of WCLAC's programmes

During the reporting period, WCLAC conducted an external midterm evaluation for its 5 years strategic plan, the final draft of the evaluation was received in June 2018. Considerable recommendations were made by the external consultant on WCLAC strategic plan. WCLAC have immediately responded to the first comment on review the Logical Framework through carrying out an internal planning workshop with WCLAC staff to define interventions and better develop indicators. WCLAC will design an action plan to respond to these recommendations with timeframe and tasks and responsibilities. This plan will be designed through a participatory approach that involves all staff members and WCLAC management team.

The evaluator raised certain recommendations such as to revisit the LFA and try to make it leaner and less detailed by reducing the number of goals to a maximum of two and the number of strategic objectives to a maximum five. In addition, the main activities need to be clustered and their number reduced to a reasonable level, introduce premarital counselling as a "preventive" measure to reduce cases of violence and divorce, create a network of service providing CBOs together with WCLAC to have regular exchange of experience and mutual learning and support, develop a set of graded training modules starting with an introductory, i.e., 'beginners' level to advanced levels, agree with the Police academy to include issues related to GBV and women rights in the curricula in order to provide awareness building/training including information about the National Referral System to all cadets, Moreover, WCLAC has to develop efficient computer based M&E either by expanding the existing MIS to accommodate information related to Plan execution or developing a separate M&E system, to broaden its awareness building influence, WCLAC is to promote gender and women's rights mainstreaming in all universities curricula, especially those related to law, media, medical studies and social work, as well as in the Police Academy.

Meanwhile, WCLAC will carry out participatory planning workshops with staff members to design a response plan for these recommendations. The plan will define timeframe, allocated resources and roles and responsibilities. This plan will also guide us for our plans to become a learning organization and to maintain our uniqueness and substantial role societal change and supporting women to access their human rights.

Develop WCLAC's library

During this reporting period, WCLAC has purchased 49 new books on women's rights. Due to WCLAC's rich library many visitors come to read and photocopy books on women's issues. From January 1st – June 30th, 236 visitors (212 females and 24males) have come to WCLAC's library.

3.2. Develop professional skills of WCLAC staff

WCLAC has ongoing capacity building for its staff through an annual capacity building plan, which includes capacity building of staff, appraisal system and incentives policy based on staff evaluation, participation in local, regional and international learning opportunities, including conferences, workshops and trainings. In 2018, WCLAC allocated budget to ensure that the administrative staff gets equal opportunities for capacity building since most of the opportunities are programmatic. In 2018, WCLAC conducted 1 team building workshop from 3 days in Jordan. The workshop aimed at giving the staff an opportunity to think for the future, build / maintain professional relations within the team, and develop the team work system within staff members.

3.6.1 Maintain and Diversify of funding resources

Maintain ongoing donor's relations

In response to the challenges presented by the scarce funding and the austerity measures taken by WCLAC, WCLAC's funding strategy now focuses on maintaining current funding and is exploring new regional and international funding opportunities, including new areas such as crowd-funding. During the year of 2018, WCLAC has had 13 funders.

Provide ongoing reports and briefings

WCLAC's external relations department keeps partners and donors informed of its work through mailing lists, bulletins, success stories and general reporting. The unit produces tailored reports on specific projects to inform the project-orientated donors of the project's process and outcomes. Over the reporting period, 2 general reports and 19 special reports were prepared. 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 their deadlines.

Part III. Annex

Tables for WCLAC's provided services

The following tables indicate the numbers of women that WCLAC has provided services to, in different categories:

Table 1. Type of Service Provided

		<i>Ramallah</i>	<i>South of the Pal. Territories</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	Total
Type of service	Legal and social	114	172	64	350
	Legal	15	48	11	74
	Social	12	38	3	53
	Total	141	258	78	477

Table 2. Type of Case

		<i>Number of cases</i>
Legal/social case	Marital obedience incl. housing	13
	Custody and visits	55
	<i>Nafaka</i> (alimony)	376
	<i>Mahr</i> (dowry)	27
	Divorce	171
	Rights issues	6
	Total	649

Table 3. Social Indicators of Women Clients

		Ramallah	Jericho (Shelter)	Bethlehem	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
family income	No Income	0	33%	4%	0	0	1%
	Less than 500	86%	57%	12%	72%	0	63%
	501 - 1000	17%	0	2%	0	0	2%
	1001- 1500	0	0	7%	0	50%	1%
Average monthly (NIS)	1501 - 2000	0	0	0	0	33%	0.5%
	2001- 2500	0	0	0	2%	34%	1%
	2501- 3000	5%	10%	80%	23%	33%	30.5%

		Ramallah	Bethlehem	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Age	Under 15	0%	0%	2%	0%	93
	16-20	4%	15%	6%	3%	130
	21-25	16%	12%	25%	5%	5
	26-35	32%	19%	35%	46%	
	36-40	17%	16%	14%	18%	
	40 and above	24%	38%	16%	26%	
	Unknown	7%	0%	2%	2%	1

		Total from all WCLAC's offices
Level of education	Unknown	3%
	No formal education	1%
	Elementary school	7%
	Primary school	13%
	Secondary school	45%
	Higher education	31%

Table 4. Source of Referral

		Total percentage from all WCLAC's offices
Source of referral	Courts	54%
	Police	1%
	Health sector	1%
	MoSA	14%
	Other institutions	11%
	Lawyers	6%
	Women by themselves	12%
	Governorate	1%

Table 5. Tool of Knowing about WCLAC

	<i>Ramallah</i>	<i>Jericho (Shelter)</i>	<i>Bethlehem</i>	<i>Hebron</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	Total	
Knowing about WCLAC	Public and NGOS	0	97%	8%	5%	13%	
	Workshops	2%	0%	3%	0	0	1%
	Previous beneficiary	7%	0	27%	7%	11%	8%
	She was a beneficiary	9%	3%	19%	17%	12%	13%
	Individuals	52%	0	31	21%	45%	31%
	Awareness sessions	1%	0	0	1%	3%	1%
	Media	2%	0	0	0%	4%	1%
	Courts	27%	0	12%	49%	12%	30%

Table 6. Type of perpetrator

	<i>Percentage</i>	
Perpetrator	Father	10%
	Ex-husband	3%
	Husband's family/ relatives	4%
	Siblings	2%
	Husband	78%
	Fiancé	3%



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WCLAC enjoys special consultative status with ECOSOC