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مركز المرأة للإرشاد القانوني والاجتماعي
Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

Femicide in the Palestinian Society

Do Women Actually Commit Suicide?

Analytical Report of Documented Femicide Cases

2021-2022

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Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)

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Disclaimer

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Introduction

This is another introduction by WCLAC's Director about an established practice that reflects continued violence in all its forms against women and girls. In its most dangerous and egregious form, this violence manifests itself in the phenomenon of femicide. It is my fervent hope that one day I will be able to write about the complete disappearance of this phenomenon from our society, and the success of our interventions as a feminist human rights organization in eradicating femicide from Palestinian society.

At WCLAC, we do not conceal our bias towards women. On the contrary, we have publicly declared this bias since our establishment in 1991. We unequivocally defend women, adopt their causes, and uphold their rights, foremost among them the right to life. This is a right enshrined in divine laws, religions, and international covenants and treaties. We take pride in our role, not only because we believe it is right and just, but because we also witness the tangible results and achievements of our work. We see it in the eyes of women, girls, children, and families, based on our unwavering conviction that women and girls have the inherent right to enjoy human dignity and live in a safe environment free from all forms of violence.

Over the course of many years, our experience has proved that the vision we adopt and pursue is becoming more established with every day that passes. It is one of the most important gateways to building and consolidating a democratic society based on principles of democracy, justice, and equality for all its members, without discrimination on any basis whatsoever. We have taken significant steps towards consolidating these foundations and laying the groundwork for them, in full partnership with partners from official institutions, human rights organizations, and women's bodies. However, there is still much work to be done and miles to go in this field.

Today, we present our latest report documenting femicide in Palestinian society. It was prepared using a rigorous analytical approach, sound methodol-

ogy, and clear tools in form and content. We do not shy away from sharing our vision, methodology or tools; on the contrary, we are transparent about these matters and present them, along with the results, to the community for dialogue, debate, and discussion. We take pride in our commitment to providing every possible means to serve society as a whole, with a particular emphasis on supporting and advocating for the rights and lives of women.

To those who may take issue with our vision and methodology, we reiterate that as long as the door to dialogue and discussion remains open, we are moving in the right direction as a society and we will not waver from this path. As for those who seek to shut down dialogue and debate, distort and overturn facts, and silence differing opinions through repression, the muffling of voices, betrayal of others or labelling people unbelievers, we urge them to confront reality and facts. Such arguments only serve those who espouse them and do not contribute to meaningful progress.

We do not exaggerate the phenomenon of femicide. We do not fabricate concepts or facts. We strive to overcome obstacles and challenges to uncover the truth and present it to society and stakeholders as a means to diagnose issues and work together to find remedies. Our legitimacy lies in the complete clarity of our actions and proposals, as well as our unwavering commitment to our declared goals articulated here and in other reports. This is what confers upon us moral and societal legitimacy.

We acknowledge that our findings may not fully capture the reality of what is happening on the ground. There may be cases and information that we have not been able to access or verify, where some aspects may be hidden deliberately or concealed from scrutiny. As we were finalizing this report about incidents of femicide documented during 2021 to 2022 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, we were surprised to come across footage that surfaced on social media of a father publicly speaking about the killing of his daughter in 2022. Strikingly, her name did not appear on our list of documented cases for that year. Hence, notwithstanding our diligent efforts, there may be undocumented cases of women and girls being silently and clandestinely killed. Specific circumstances and conditions are presented in this report and the facts, gathered meticulously by our field researchers with the utmost accuracy and professionalism, speak for themselves. Our analysis of the verified data was conducted rigorously in line with our unwavering commitment to eradicating the phenomenon of femicide from our society.

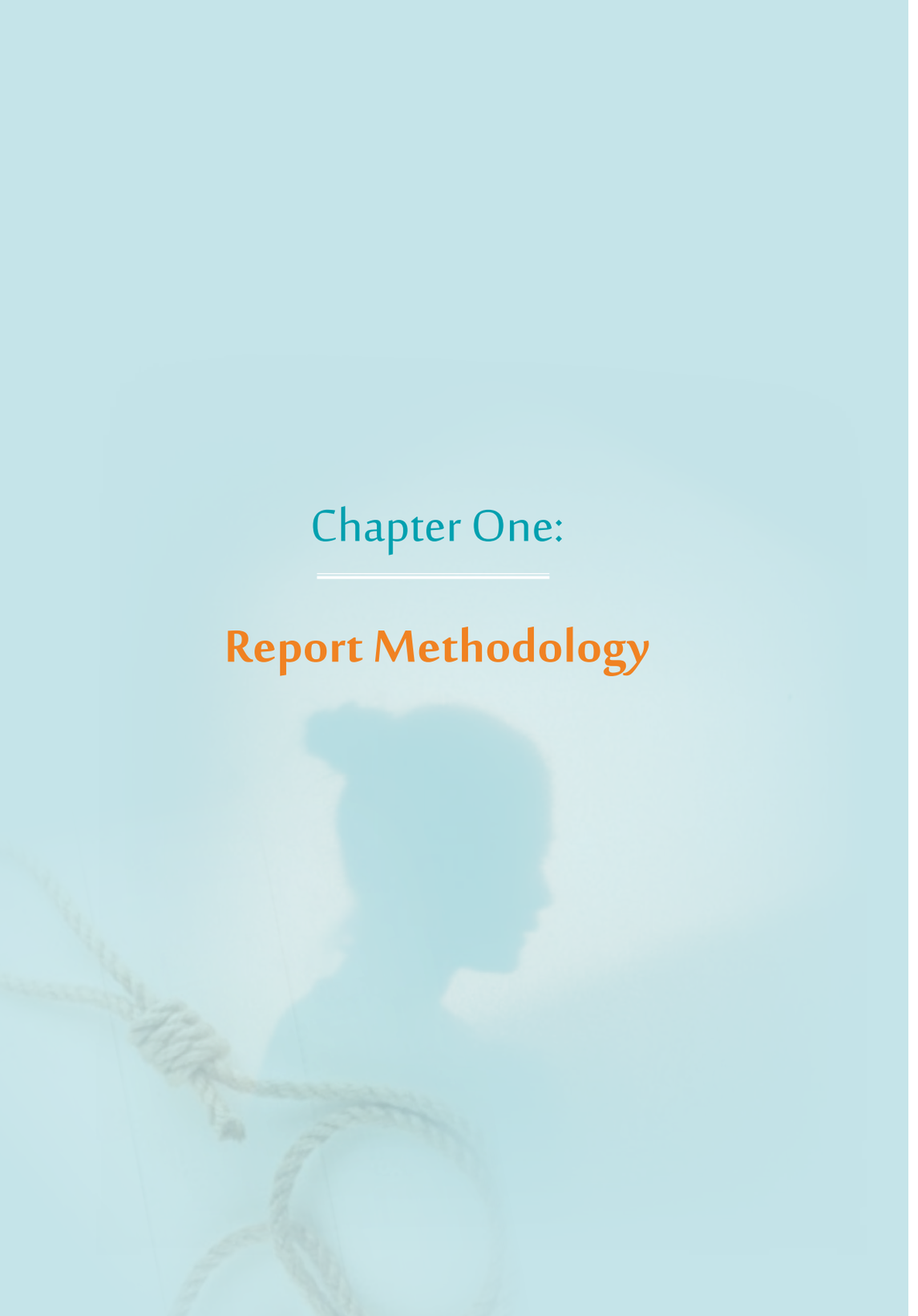
To end this introduction, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude, appreciation, and respect to all individuals involved in collecting information, documenting, analyzing, reviewing, and providing feedback on the initial copies of this document, ultimately shaping it into its final form. Additionally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to the team at WCLAC for their unwavering commitment and dedication to completing their work with patience and sincerity. Their contribution has been invaluable in shaping the final form of this introduction.

The main question remains of whether Palestinian women actually commit suicide.

This is what the report attempts to answer

Randa Siniora

General Director WCLAC



Chapter One:

Report Methodology

Chapter One: Report Methodology

Preface

One of the key goals of the Women's Centre for Legal and Social Counselling (WCLAC) is to highlight discrimination and violence against women in Palestinian society. This includes all forms, types, expressions and sources, whether from the violence of the Israeli occupation and its ongoing violations of the rights of Palestinian women in various fields, or societal discrimination and violence arising from the patriarchal culture. This culture is founded on male patriarchal domination and the subjugation of other societal groups, particularly women, to maintain control and hegemony, and to perpetuate the interests of the dominant groups. The phenomenon of femicide is an integral part of this widespread culture, particularly in Palestinian society but also in other societies. It is one of the most dangerous and heinous forms of discrimination against women, and an increasingly common expression of this discrimination and violence.

For more than two decades, WCLAC has focused on monitoring and documenting this phenomenon to identify its scope and the socioeconomic, psychological and health repercussions on women, and on the overall structure of the Palestinian community and family.

WCLAC adopts a feminist and legal vision in which femicide is an issue relevant to all groups and institutions within society. As such, addressing and finding solutions to this issue is a societal obligation rooted in human rights, legal mandates and moral imperatives applicable to all official and private community institutions, and not limited to any particular social group or institution. This vision contrasts with the traditional cultural perspective that has persisted for centuries of femicide as a private, family matter that should not be discussed openly in society. Over the years, this perception has become deeply entrenched in societal and legal cultural frameworks that affirm and "legitimize" femicide by providing justifications for the killing on one hand, and ensuring that the killers are not held to account and are ensured impunity on the other.

We reaffirm our perspective that the killing of any human being is a moral,

societal and legal issue that should not be excused on any grounds. Thus, it is necessary to continue to highlight the phenomenon of the killing of women as an issue for community research and discussion, as well as for decision makers. Efforts will also continue to transform femicide from a private to a public societal issue that receives appropriate scrutiny and action to eliminate the phenomenon. The issue must be addressed at a general cultural level and also through legislation that tackles all types of gender-based criminal behaviour by imposing deterrent sentences on the perpetrators.

Building on our previous efforts, this report addresses femicides that occurred in 2021-2022 and were documented by the WCLAC during these two years. Murder cases were documented by age and geographical distribution, in addition to information related to the victims about their work, marital status, academic achievements, and the method by which the murder took place. The information includes details about the murderer and their relationship with the victim, the cause of death where that could ascertained from official authorities or through fieldwork, and other comprehensive information related to the murdered women and the circumstances of their deaths.

Later in the report, we provide information on the ongoing occurrence of femicide. Our documentation reveals that 57 women and girls have been killed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the past two years under diverse circumstances and conditions. The sole commonality in these cases is that the victims were women and girls. This underscores the comments discussed above. In line with all the analytical reports we have produced in this field, our findings confirm the persistence of this phenomenon and highlight the significant gaps that remain in efforts to combat and eradicate it comprehensively.

The report includes data, statistics, and information related to the victims of murder and the circumstances of the deaths. A preliminary analysis of these crimes is conducted based on WCLAC's adoption of a feminist stance in calling for justice, equality, and the rejection of all forms and types of discrimination and persecution against women. We reject the violation of women's rights in economic, social, cultural, civil, and political fields, and especially their basic right as stipulated in all human conventions and norms.

The report also provides concise analysis of the information documented. In conclusion, it proposes key recommendations, including some defined in previous reports, alongside new recommendations that have emerged in light of developments and changes in the general societal framework.

This report confirms the conclusions of several previous WCLAC reports about the existence of discrepancies in statistics and data related to the murder of women. These discrepancies can be attributed to a variety of reasons, one of the most important being the methodology followed by various entities in monitoring and documenting femicide cases. It can also be attributed to the geographical scope covered by different institutions. It is worth noting that WCLAC operates within a geographical and societal scope that covers the entire Palestinian territory in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, regardless of the political divisions that still exist. These divisions affect the nature of the systems and laws in place, yet they are interconnected and continuous in terms of roots and the prevailing societal cultural background.

After two decades of diligent monitoring and meticulous documentation, we remain committed to enduring sound foundations of the empowerment process. By significantly augmenting our capacity to analyze the current status, we can offer practical and realistic recommendations for curtailing the proliferation of the phenomenon and ultimately lead to its complete eradication.

This report is consistent with our strategy, developed over two decades, to monitor and document femicide with thorough analysis of the data collected. Our methodology builds upon the work carried out by WCLAC in a series of earlier analytical reports on femicide.[1]

1) WCLAC has published a series of studies, reports, and analyses related to femicide, namely:

- A study of the killing of women in Palestinian society by Dr. Nadera Kevorkian in 2001.
- Report on women›s murders in Palestine by Dr. Lamees Abu Nahla in 2004-2006.
- Report entitled *Women Without Names* covering 2007-2010.
- Analysis of judicial rulings issued against the perpetrators of murder of women.
- Report on women whose lives were taken: analysis of cases documented in 2012-2013.
- Report on the murder of women in Palestine, the prevailing culture and the requirements for change. It covers murder cases documented by WCLAC during 2014-2015.
- An analytical report on femicide entitled *Discrimination and Violence against Women: The Fertile Soil of Murder* dealing with 76 cases of murder of women and girls documented by WCLAC during a three-year period (2016-2018).
- *The Murder of Women during the Time of Corona* report analyzed 58 cases of the murder of women and girls documented during 2019-2020.

Report Objectives

- Provide information and accurate data on the monitoring and documentation on femicide in Palestinian society, addressing official, civil, and human rights institutions, and also scholars and analysts studying this phenomenon.
- Present a feminist human rights analysis grounded in principles of gender-based justice and equality, while examining various dimensions, factors, and repercussions of femicide in Palestinian society.
- Continue to shed light on the phenomenon of killing women in Palestinian society, addressing it as a societal issue that requires open discussion and dialogue rather than dismissing it as an isolated and private incident.
- Emphasize the negative effects and repercussions of femicide in various domains, and the impact on different groups and societal institutions.
- Provide proposals and recommendations to the relevant authorities and institutions as practical steps towards combating femicide.
- Advocate for decision makers to formulate and enact legislation that ensures justice for victims and which adheres to international conventions ratified by the State of Palestine.

Report Methodology

This report employs qualitative analysis methodology to examine the information and data pertaining to the femicides documented by WCLAC during the period 2021-2022. The methodology reviews the results of documentation and data analysis gathered and documented over a span of two years. The process encompasses:

- Continued construction and accumulation of analysis that draws on over twenty years of experience in documenting and analyzing violence and discrimination against women. This approach builds on previous studies and reports that have investigated the issue of violence against women in general, with a particular focus on Palestinian society. These studies provide a comprehensive introduction and foundation for understanding the prevalence of killing of women in Palestinian society.
- Presentation of the results of monitoring and documentation carried out by WCLAC (forms, reports and supporting documents).
- Discussion sessions with WCLAC specialists.
- Official meetings with relevant official organizations and bodies, including the police, especially the Family Protection Units, and the office of the Palestinian Public Prosecution.
- Ongoing coordination with relevant civil and human rights organizations who address this critical issue.
- Maintaining regular and systematic follow-up and communication channels between field researchers and the program coordinator to thoroughly analyze challenges and obstacles encountered during the monitoring and documentation process. This strategy facilitates the exchange of information, experiences, and skills among all team members involved in documentation.

Scope of the Report

The scope of the report covers the Palestinian territories, encompassing the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The information and figures presented in the report were not officially available at the official level since 2007.

Documentation and Data Collection

The Femicide Monitoring and Documentation Program is a major part of WCLAC Local and International Advocacy Unit. One branch of the program is dedicated to monitoring and documenting violations of Palestinian women's rights by the occupying Israeli forces. The team responsible for the Femicide Monitoring and Documentation Program comprises a team coordinator and seven female field researchers who meticulously monitor and document all aspects related to the killing of women in Palestine. Their operations span all the West Bank governorates, including Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The female researchers undergo extensive training over several years, with regular updates and ongoing training in monitoring and documentation. Additionally, the team has received specialized training on data and information analysis methodologies.

WCLAC consistently engages female researchers in a wide range of activities and events, including training, capacity building, awareness and education, and mobilization and advocacy activities on various feminist, human rights, and societal issues. In recent years, WCLAC has diligently trained and qualified female field researchers in monitoring and documentation, and methodologies for data and information collection. Information is drawn from both official and unofficial sources within the community and institutions such as the police, the public prosecution, civil society organizations, media outlets, and the social circles of victims such as family, friends, and neighbours. WCLAC also organizes recreational and debriefing activities for the team, and facilitates meetings and joint sessions with the staff of the Local and International Advocacy Unit to foster familiarity with the unit's work, advocacy programs, and to promote the exchange of expertise and experience.

WCLAC actively engages female researchers in ongoing data evaluation and seeks their input in continuous evaluation of the course and procedures of the documentation process. Great importance is placed on involving staff in the development of work and documentation mechanisms, including forms and reports. Female researchers are actively involved in the preparation of analytical reports such as this one and make valuable contributions throughout the entire process.

All branches of WCLAC ensure that female researchers have access to the facilities they require, and to technical, logistical and moral support to motivate them in their work and overcome any challenges they may face. Researchers are provided with letters and documents to facilitate communications with the relevant authorities and gain access to official data and information.

The team of field researchers comprises the following female colleagues:

- Nadwa Barghouti **- Hilweh Saqr** **- Souad Shtewi**

- Yara Al Obweh **- Faiza Abu Shamsiyeh** **- Sarah Daoud**

Volunteer **Dania Hawari** made significant contributions to the follow-up process during the second half of 2022 in tasks such as communications, data collection, data entry, support for the analysis process and assisting with the preparation of the study.

WCLAC and its researchers face several significant obstacles in data collection. One major challenge arises from the social environment of the murdered women or girls. The prevailing culture still shrouds these cases in secrecy and privacy, thereby limiting the accessibility of information. This poses a persistent challenge for researchers in obtaining comprehensive data on cases.

Challenges Encountered

- Difficulties in obtaining information and data related to murder cases extend to details about law enforcement and litigation procedures. While acknowledging that objective circumstances may impede the gathering of accurate information on femicide cases, such as ongoing official investigations and the need to maintain confidentiality during the investigative process, we believe that these reasons should not hinder data collection. Rather, it should be an opportunity to enhance our documentation efforts, especially as we treat all the information acquired with utmost professionalism and comply with strict rules on confidentiality and privacy throughout the monitoring and documentation process.
- At times, lack of information, even the most basic and routine typically disseminated through media and social networking sites, poses a significant challenge. In certain instances, we have chanced upon preliminary information pertaining to unreported cases of killings. This raises concerns about potentially similar cases that may have escaped our attention and which may remain undocumented.
- The intentional and deliberate withholding of information, particularly in the social networks of some of the victims, was a prevalent issue encountered by field researchers. In some cases, there was a deliberate effort to withhold information and the families of victims can be particularly resistant. Field researchers often face stubborn and unyielding responses when attempting to collect information on cases. This obstruction not only prevents access to information but acts as a warning that the matter is considered a private family issue that no one has the right to discuss in any way.
- Occasionally, some community institutions have declined to provide information to field researchers and have redirected them to the relevant authorities or families. This has even applied to social and personal details about the victim such as their name or age. This is an indication of the pressure to withhold public information and limit the scope of the issue to a specific social group such as the family.
- To date, there seems to be a lack of agreement and societal consensus among official, civil, and human rights entities regarding the concepts and terminology relating to femicide. This has a negative impact on the existence of effective documentation to monitor this phenomenon accurately.
- Lack of agreement on the methodology for monitoring and documenting femicide has led to data being reported in various ways by different organizations. This lack of uniformity undermines the overall process of shedding light on the phenomenon and allows certain parties to question the accuracy of the figures.
- Lack of skills and resources for comprehensive documentation of all stages of femicide is another challenge. For instance, while WCLAC documents data and publishes analysis of the information collected, it lacks sufficient resources to effectively track litigation procedures. This is particularly true in cases where the murderer is apprehended and indicted as the legal proceedings can span several years. There is a noticeable absence of a dedicated entity to monitor, document, and study the wide-ranging repercussions of femicide on families, including the effects on children of different age groups.

Chapter Two:

Presentation and Analysis of Data, Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter Two: Presentation and Analysis of Data, Conclusions and Recommendations

Data Presentation

In data presentation, it is imperative to provide clear explanations of the concepts utilized throughout the documentation process. In line with our previous practice, we have deliberately limited the terminology used to describe instances of killing women. Here, we will elucidate why we have chosen to use the concept of "murder" over other terminologies employed by several organizations and institutions, both official and unofficial, and in the social network of the victims, whether within or outside their own families.

It is important to note that the presentation of these concepts does not imply our agreement or wholesale adoption of them. Our definition of these concepts comes from a social perspective that takes into account the context of discrimination, prolonged violence, and oppression against women in all human societies, particularly in our Palestinian society. The definition of social concepts is also inherently influenced by power relations in patriarchal societies, and is entrenched in the knowledge systems of societies, often wielded by dominant groups and segments to reinforce their influence, control, and reproduce forms of control and subjugation.

Even legal concepts adhere to the notion that the law as a comprehensive system and including its concepts and texts, reflects and expresses the prevailing power dynamics and balances within a society at the time of its enactment. These concepts and terminologies are not static and are susceptible to change. Such change is contextualized within the process of societal transformation that seeks to replace existing power relations with new, more just and equitable ones, aimed at addressing the historical oppression that certain social groups have long endured.

WCLAC's field workers have diligently monitored and documented a total of 57 cases of the killing of women and girls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the period 2021-2022. In our efforts to accurately capture and describe these distressing incidents, we have employed specific terms as follows:

Suicide: A total of 20 of the documented incidents were categorized as suicides in which women or girls took their own lives. We elaborate further in our analysis on our perspective of this distressing phenomenon and our approach in addressing it from a social standpoint.

Head injury due to a fall: Two of the recorded incidents were categorized as deaths resulting from head injuries caused by falls.

Medical error and/or negligence: Over a two-year period, one incident was documented under this category.

Misuse of weapon: Whether by the victim herself or by her relatives. Four cases were classified under this category.

Falling from a height or into a well: A total of six cases were classified under this category.

Family quarrel: One girl was recorded in this category.

Beaten to death: Whether beaten by hand or using other instruments such as sticks or sharp implements. Seven cases were documented in this category.

Mysterious circumstances: One incident was recorded.

Drowning: One incident was recorded.

Murder: Whether by gunfire or with a knife, an axe or other sharp instrument, or by suffocation. Nine cases were classified under this category.

Heart attack: Three cases were classified under this category.

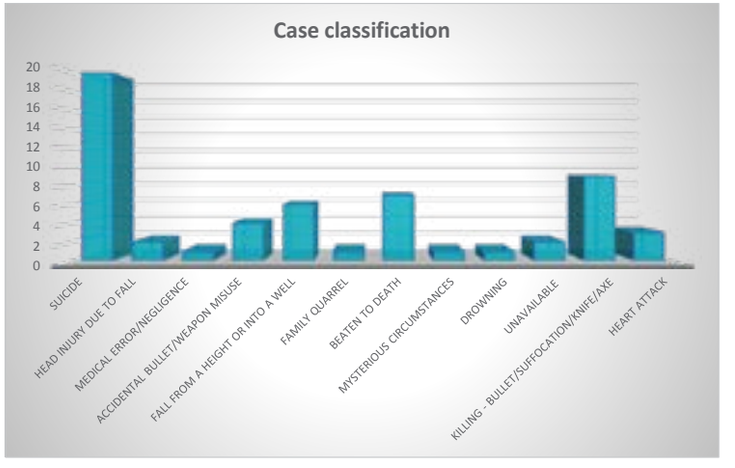
Other: Incidents with insufficient information for classification in any specific category and where obtaining information from any source proved extremely challenging were categorized as "other". Two cases were classified in this manner.

Table 1 and Chart 1 below provide figures that illustrate the classifications described.

Table 1. Classification of cases by category

Cause of death	Number	Percentage
Suicide	20	35%
Head injury due to fall	2	4%
Medical error/negligence	1	2%
Accidental bullet/weapon misuse	4	7%
Fall from a height or into a well	6	11%
Family quarrel	1	2%
Beaten to death	7	12%
Mysterious circumstances	1	2%
Drowning	1	2%
Unavailable	2	4%
Killing - bullet/suffocation/knife/axe	9	16%
Heart attack	3	5%

Chart 1. Classification of cases by category



Distribution of cases by year

As per the data in Table 2, cases were classified by year. In 2021, a total of 28 cases were recorded, accounting for approximately 50% of the 57 cases in the .2021-2022 period. A further 29 cases were recorded in 2022

Table 2. Classification of cases by year

Year	Number
2021	28
2022	29
Total	57

Geographic distribution of cases

As shown in Chart 2 below and Table 3, the distribution of cases between the West Bank and Gaza Strip reveals that there were 37 femicide cases in the West Bank, accounting for approximately 65% of all cases during 2021-2022. The Gaza Strip recorded 20 cases during the same period, representing 35% of all cases.

Chart 2. Distribution of cases between the West Bank and Gaza Strip

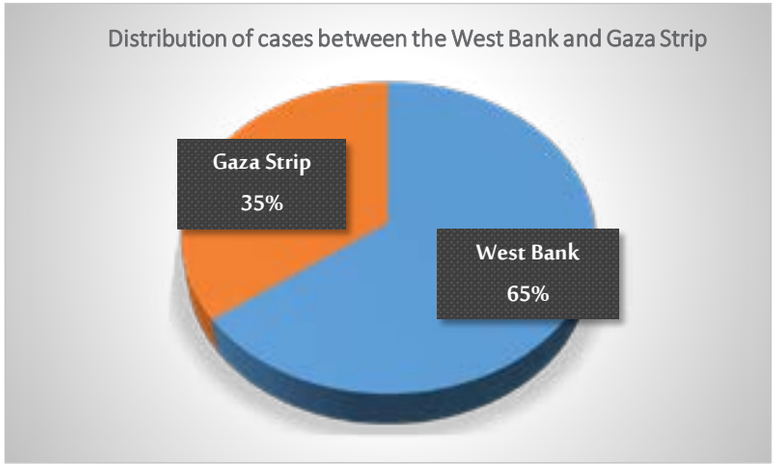


Table 3. Distribution of cases between the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Area	Number	Percentage
West Bank	37	65%
Gaza Strip	20	35%
Total	57	

During the two-year period, only one femicide case (2%) was recorded in each of the governorates of central Gaza, Rafah, Jericho and the Jordan Valley.

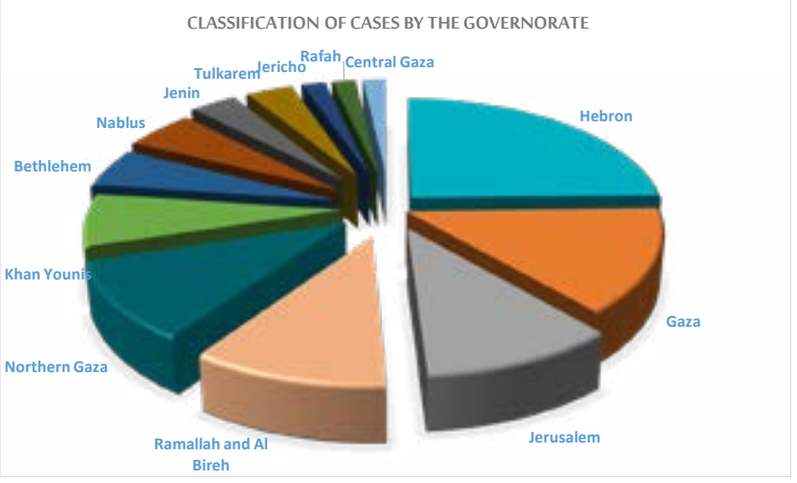
In Jenin and Tulkarm governorates there were two cases (5%) in each. The governorates of Nablus and Bethlehem had three cases (5%) in each. Khan Younis governorate had four cases (7%), and the governorates of north Gaza, Jerusalem, Ramallah and Al-Bireh recorded six cases each (11%). The governorates of Gaza and Hebron recorded the highest rates with 8 cases in Gaza (14%), and 14 cases in Hebron governorate (25%) during the two years. Table 4 and Chart 3 classify cases by governorate.

Table 4. Classification of cases by governorate

Governorate	Number	Percentage
Hebron	14	25%
Gaza	8	14%
Jerusalem	6	11%
Ramallah and Al-Bireh	6	11%
Northern Gaza	6	11%
Khan Younis	4	7%
Bethlehem	3	5%
Nablus	3	5%
Jenin	2	4%

Tulkarem	2	4%
Jericho	1	2%
Rafah	1	2%
Central Gaza	1	2%
Total	**57**	**100%**

Chart 3. Classification of cases by governorate



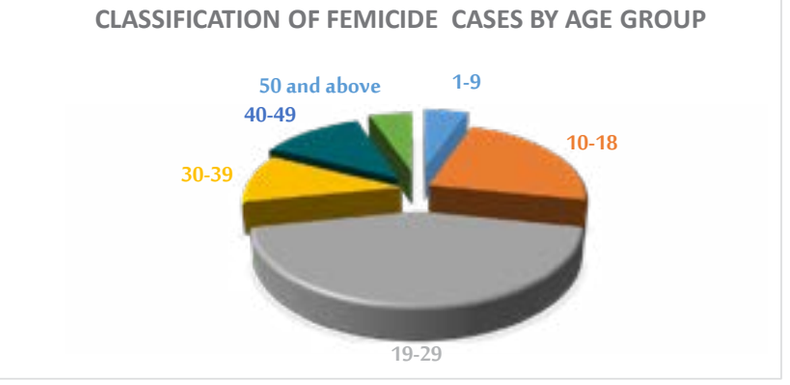
Distribution by age group

Table 5 and Chart 4 classify femicide cases by age group. They indicate that the largest number of cases were concentrated in the 19 to 29 year age group with 25 cases and a percentage of 44%, slightly less than half the total number of cases. This was followed by the 10-18 years' age group with 13 cases (23%) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the two years. The age groups 30-39 and 40-49 years made up 11% and 12% respectively. The age group of below 9 years and more than 50 years made up 5% each.

Table 5. Classification of cases by age group

Age group	Number	Percentage
1-9	3	5%
10-18	13	23%
19-29	25	44%
30-39	6	11%
40-49	7	12%
and above 50	3	5%
Total	**57**	

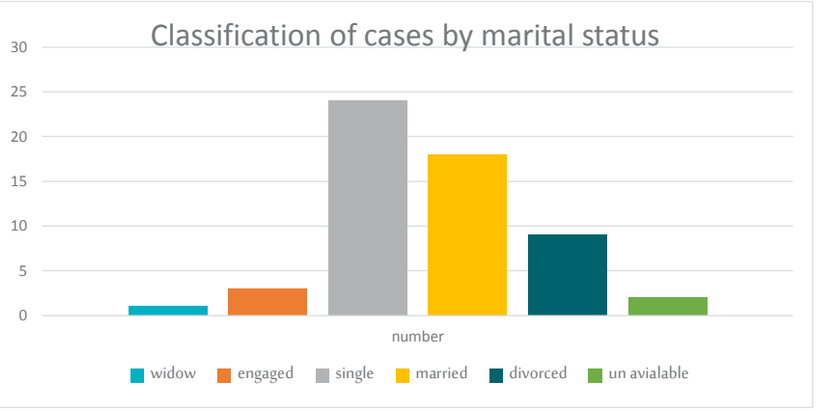
Chart 4. Classification of Femicide cases by age group



Distribution by marital status

Chart 5 shows the classification of femicide cases by marital status. The largest number of 24 victims was in the category of single women, approximately 42% of all cases. Next came 18 cases of married women (32%), followed by nine cases (16%) of divorced women. Three victims were engaged to be married (5%) and there was one case of a widow (2%).

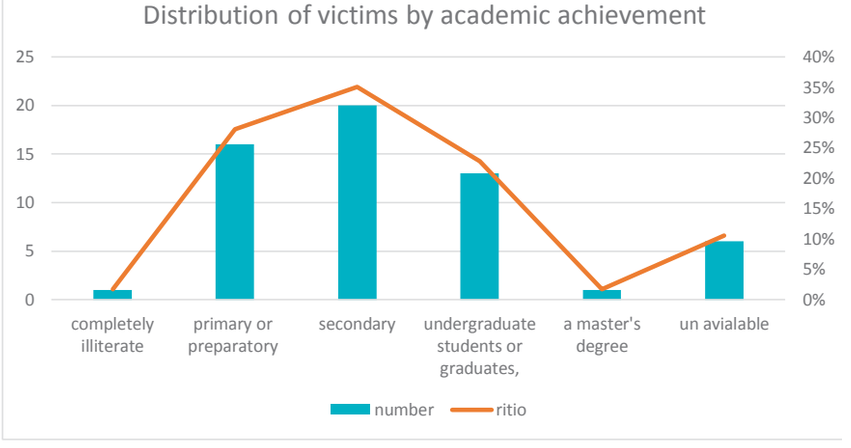
Chart 5. Classification of cases by marital status



Distribution of victims by academic achievement

According to Chart 6, there was one female victim in 2021-2022 who was completely illiterate, 16 had primary or preparatory education (28%), 13 were either undergraduate students or graduates, and one victim held a master's degree. The largest percentage of 20 victims had completed secondary school (35%).

Chart 6. Distribution of victims by academic achievement



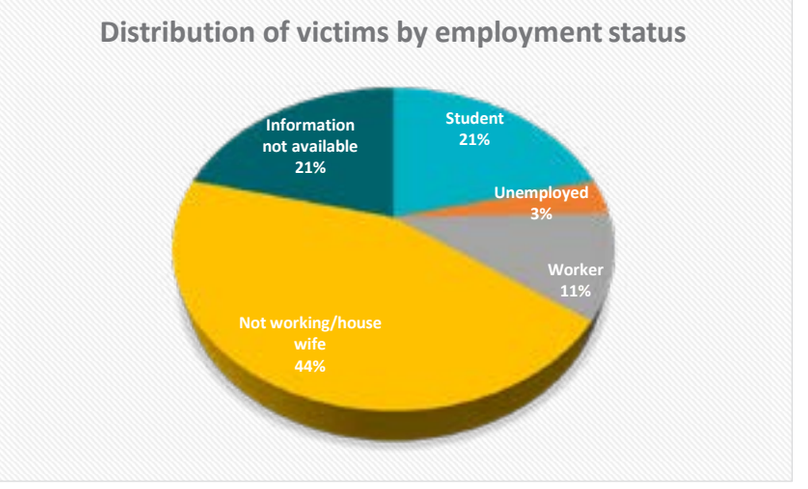
Distribution of victims by employment status

According to Table 6, at the time the victims were killed, 12 of them were still students at various stages, two of them had lost their jobs and were unemployed, six were employed in different professions and jobs, and 25 were housewives Chart 7 shows the employment status of victims.

Table 6. Classification of cases by employment status

Employment status	Number
Student	12
Unemployed	2
Worker	6
Housewife	25
Information unavailable	12

Chart 7. Distribution of victims by employment status



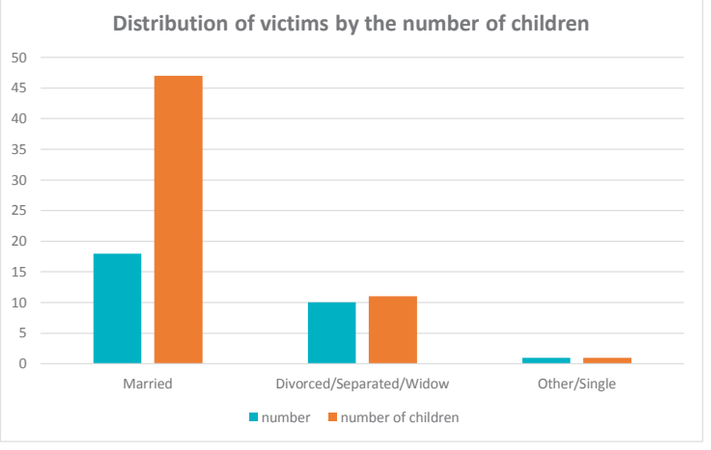
Distribution of victims by number of children left behind

According to Table 7 and Chart 8, the 57 victims documented over the two-year period left behind 59 children. A total of 29 victims left children behind when they were killed, amongst them were 18 married women with 47 children, in addition to10 women who were either widows, divorced or separated from their husbands with a total of 11 children. There was a case of a single woman who left behind a child after she became pregnant as a result of sexual abuse. This victim had been diagnosed as mentally and socially challenged, yet she was not spared from sexual assault or her subsequent murder.

Table 7. Distribution of victims by number of children

Marital status	Number	Number of children
Married	18	47
Divorced/Separated/Widow	10	11
Other/Single	1	1
Total	**29**	**59**

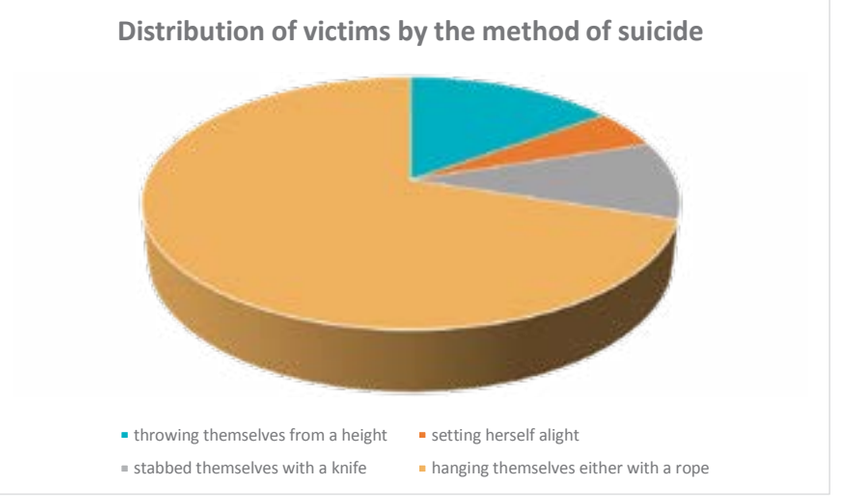
Chart 8. Distribution of victims by number of children



Distribution of victims by method of "suicide"

Chart 9 shows the distribution of victims by method of suicide. Of 20 victims classified as suicide cases, three committed suicide by throwing themselves from a height (15%), and one committed suicide by setting herself alight. Two stabbed themselves with a knife, and 14 committed suicide by hanging themselves either with a rope, a handkerchief, or a head covering. This method of suicide made up more than two-thirds of cases or 70% of the number of victims classified as suicide.

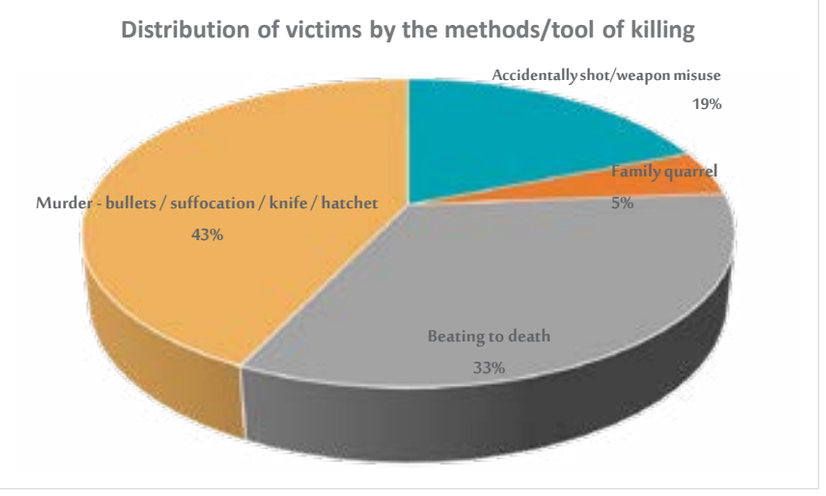
Chart 9. Distribution of victims by method of suicide



Distribution of victims by method of killing

As Chart 10 illustrates, of 21 victims classified as murder, four victims (19%) were classed as accidental death due to misuse of a weapon, whether the victim was the one who misused the weapon or a member of her family. One victim was killed in a family quarrel, while seven victims (33%) were beaten to death. The highest percentage of 9 victims (43%) were killed either by shooting, with a knife, an axe or suffocation.

Chart 10. Distribution of victims by method of killing

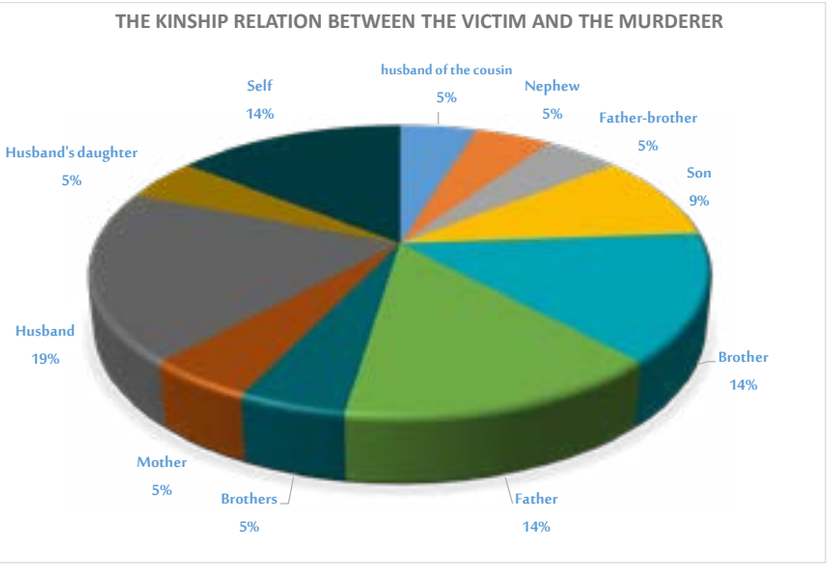


Distribution by relationship between the victim and the murderer

Chart 11 shows the relationship between the victim and the murderer. Husbands made up the highest proportion with four victims (19%) of the 21 classified as murdered at the hands of a relative. The percentages were (14%) for femicide cases where the murderer was the brother, (3 cases), the father (3 cases) or suicide (3 cases).

Femcide cases classified as accidental death refer to victims of weapon misuse. Two victims were killed by their son, one by the husband of a cousin, one by a nephew, one by a father and brother, one by her brothers, one by her daughter-in-law, and one by her mother.

Chart 11. Relationship between the victim and the murderer



Pre-femicide violence

Of the 57 cases documented, there was clear evidence in 34 cases that the victim had been subjected to violence prior to the murder, but in the other 23 cases there was no clear evidence. Chart 12 indicates that 46% of the 57 victims had been subjected to violence prior to the murder, 8 (14%) had not been subjected to any violence prior to the crime, and no information was available about 40% of cases.

Chart 13 shows that of 26 victims subjected to violence prior to the murder, more than half of them had been subjected to complex physical and psychological violence (14 victims, 54%), 5 (19%) had been exposed to physical violence, and the others had been exposed to at least one of the forms of violence shown in the chart albeit to a lesser extent.

Chart 12. Pre-feomicide violence

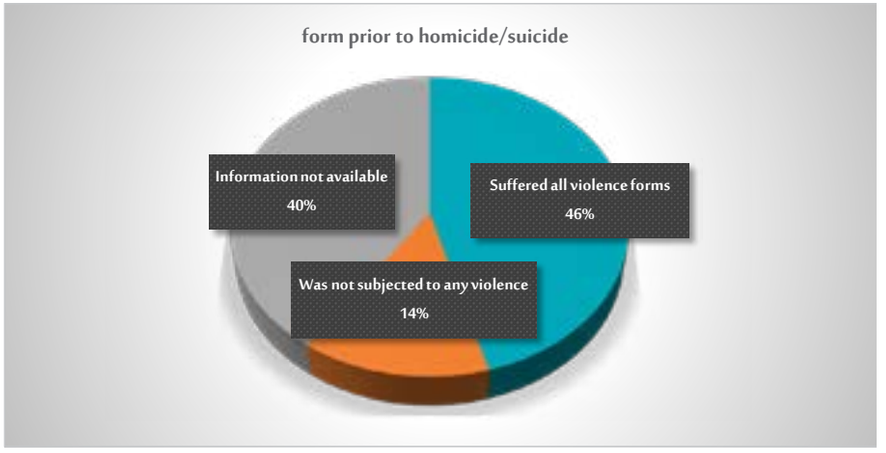
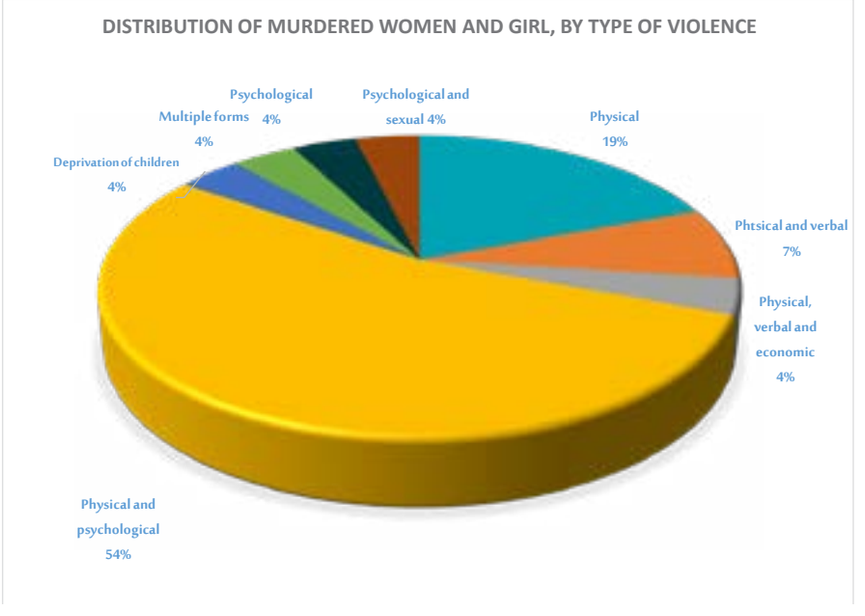


Chart 13. Pre-femicide forms of violence



Data analysis and results

Defining concepts and terms

The philosopher Michel Foucault believes that the self and identity do not emerge in isolation from the existing power relations, which are not limited to apparatus of oppression and control such as the army or police but which permeate all aspects of society. Thus, the self exists in the context of the prevailing power relations and resistance to them. Foucault argues that it is important to examine meaning within the structure of discourse because the specific historical and social context determines the identity and meaning of phrases and concepts.

Within the framework of our feminist perspective, we outlined at the beginning of this chapter various concepts that exist in the community, and within the legal and cultural framework, to describe phenomenon such as femicide in Palestinian society. We see that the use of these concepts in the form described is generally aimed at fragmenting and dismantling the idea or phenomenon of femicide into several parts and components. These parts are not interconnected in relation to the concept of gender but by generalizing and interpreting each part separately from the other, the existence of the concept as a phenomenon and the existence of an intellectual and social system that actually links all the concepts is denied.

In short, fragmentation aims to negate the intellectual content associated with feminist thought, and consolidates the cultural foundations that perpetuate patriarchal beliefs based on the domination and subjugation of women, and the practice of discrimination and violence against them, including the violation of their right to life.

We present these concepts as they are used in social and cultural discourse, and translated into the legal and official language in the context of our society. Thus, the discourse frames the concept of suicide, of mysterious circumstances, falling, drowning, falling from a height, weapon misuse, and so on to reduce the number of women and girls murdered according to the definition relied on in the societal culture. We have seen that by disaggregating the numbers, which we monitored over two years, and distributing them to these cultural concepts, the real number of women killed shrinks dramatically. Consequently, many

groups question the definition of femicide and attempt to frame it as merely individual cases rather than a phenomenon, thereby denying the need for society to discuss it as a phenomenon and seek solutions. This tends to perpetuate the perception of femicide as a rare and private family issue, and blocks exploration of it at the societal level.

This may also be a means by which traditional culture and the institutions that express it attempt to reshuffle concepts and perpetuate the same traditional cultural concepts in new forms. We have shown in more than one previous report that the traditional culture views the issue of femicide as a private issue within a specific societal framework. Discussions at the societal level are not permitted. Indeed, the issue cannot be treated as one related to society but only as a private family issue. The terminology of «suicide» may be a means used by the traditional culture to return the issue of femicide, from the public to the private sphere. It is common in society not to discuss the details of a suicide, and to preserve the privacy of the individual and the reasons that prompted them to commit suicide.

Within this context, we reiterate our strategy and vision in redefining these concepts and linking them within the framework of femicide as an existing societal phenomenon the existence of which cannot be denied, especially with the numbers being documented every year. We believe that it is important to disaggregate the figures under different headings and categories rather than collect them based on a specific social-cultural context and a traditional patriarchal culture. This reasoning must be reaffirmed by searching for links that combine the different concepts. Of course, this is not an obligatory grouping aimed at proving what we want to see but a logical and rational means to objectively examine the context in which a case occurs. Furthermore, the difficulties that we encounter in gathering and documenting information indicate that there are deliberate attempts not to disclose information, an intention to keep it secret, which raises many more questions than answers.

In the cultural and societal sense, from our feminist perspective, the data available to us is what we have collated over several years of documentation of this phenomenon. This supports the “legitimacy” of our work in terms of the many concepts and terminologies used in femicide cases, and reaffirms our use of the term femicide. Later, we will discuss some concepts in detail, whether by analysis or through data and numbers, and examine them in both their historical context and in their cultural and legal framework. For example, we examine the phenomenon of suicide, which was the dominant feature of cases that we documented during the last ten years.

Discrimination and violence in all its forms constitute femicide

Statistics from several institutions indicate high rates of violence and discrimination imposed on the lives of women in Palestinian society. These figures are backed up by the results of the annual survey on domestic violence by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the last of which was in 2019 and covered violence in all its forms and expressions. Discrimination and misogyny against women and girls remains a dominant feature of relationships. We believe that this constitutes the basis on which femicide is perpetuated.

A report by the Palestinian Public Prosecution indicated that 1,732 crimes were reported for investigation in 2021, in addition to 49 investigated in the previous year. The rate of adjudication of these crimes was 97%. Male complainants made up approximately 68% and female complainants made up 32%. A total of 224 complaints were considered as electronic blackmailing, 619 cases of online slander and defamation, and 1129 cases of threatening to use the internet. The afore mentioned report didn’t clarify the proportion of males and females in these cases[2].

During the year 2021, the Public Prosecution Office recorded (38) murdered victims , including (5) females, (31) males, and (2) female children, who are two girls.[3]

According to Palestinian Police reports, there were 22 suicides cases , 209 attempted suicides, 186 cases of falling from a height, and 6 cases of drowning. Of the 22 suicides, 16 were male and 6 were female. In 2021, there were 45 murdered people, including 36 males and 9 females. The police reports listed the motives for these crimes as family quarrels, revenge, mental illness, and other classifications. Three cases were classified as motivated by “honour” issues[4].

WCLAC and grassroots partner institutions provide legal and social counselling and support services in most West Bank governorates to women and

2) Public Prosecution of the State of Palestine, Twelfth Annual Report, 2021, pp. 99-101.
3) Public Prosecution of the State of Palestine, Twelfth Annual Report, 2021, p.72.
4) Palestinian Police, 2021 Annual Report, Police website, Access date: 1/2/2023, Electronic link: https://www.palpolice.ps/annual-statistics/453577.html

girls who are abused and whose rights are violated. Services were provided to approximately 1479 women and girls. Table 8 shows that half of this number received counselling on one occasion via telephone and online. The other half were offered either legal or social counselling, or both, by attending the offices of WCLAC and partner institutions.

Table 8. Legal and social counselling services

Legal and social Counselling services for 2022 (WCLAC and partner CBOs)					
Governorate	**Social**	**Legal**	**Social and legal**	**Counselling-once**	**Total**
Ramallah	25	29	73	234	361
Hebron	0	39	135	287	461
Jerusalem	2	7	59	157	225
Bethlehem	0	22	19	78	119
Emergency centre	30	0	1	0	31
Jenin, Tubas, Tulkarem, and Qalqilya	33	22	52		107
The South			92		92
Jericho			83		83
Total	**90**	**119**	**514**	**756**	**1479**
Percentage	**6%**	**8%**	**35%**	**51%**	

Suicide or induced suicide

This concept has been of note during the past ten years of our documentation of the phenomenon of femicide, in Palestinian society. To clarify this further, we have documented 329 deaths disaggregated by year as follows:

Year	Number	Year	Number
2004	**5**	2014	**27**
2005	**3**	2015	**15**
2006	**8**	2016	**23**
2007	**11**	2017	**29**
2008	**5**	2018	**24**
2009	**9**	2019	**21**
2010	**10**	2020	**37**
2011	**5**	2021	**28**
2012	**13**	2022	**29**
2013	**27**		
Total	**96**		**233**	**329**

Suicide has become prominent in recent years in the reports and statistics of many institutions concerned with the phenomenon of femicide. WCLAC documented the following cases of suicide: during the three years 2007-2010, nine cases (24%) were classified as suicide out of 38 cases of murder; in 2011-2012, we monitored seven cases of suicide (38%) out of 18 cases of murder; and during 2014-2015 the suicide rate was 19%. During 2016-2018 suicide made up 58% of the 76 cases documented over the three years. In 2019-2020, 9 cases (15%) were registered as suicide out of 58 cases. Most recently in 2021-2022, there were 20 cases of suicide (35%) out of 57 cases. Table 8 shows that suicide rates during the past ten years made up approximately one-third of the cases documented since 2007.

Table 8. Number of cases classified as suicide since 2007

Year	Murder cases	Suicide cases	Percentage
2007-2010	38	9	24%
2011-2012	18	7	39%
2014-2015	42	8	19%
2016-2018	76	44	58%
2019-2020	58	9	16%
2021-2022	57	20	35%
Total	**289**	**97**	**34%**

This is a very high percentage, as we noted when we referred to this phenomenon in our previous report.[5]

The phenomenon of suicide is a social phenomenon and only social facts can be used to explain and analyse it. It is more than a merely individual phenomenon because the patterns of individual behaviour are formed and formulated within society despite the fact that individuals see themselves as acting with free will. This is because the social framework, especially social movements, are independent of and compelling to individuals. Changes in suicide rates reflect changes in social reality, mainly social movements that play a role in causing suicide. Each social group has a collective will of its own to act; this is the source of individual will and not its result. Currents of selfishness, altruism or non-conformity permeate all of society. The tendencies of the social entity as a whole have an impact on individuals and push them to commit suicide. [6]

5) Our report *Discrimination and Violence against Women: The Fertile Soil of Murder* refers to the following on page 37: "Statistics from the public prosecution office indicate a total of 236 cases of attempted suicide and suicide. These figures showed that there were 196 cases of suicide or attempted suicide by adults and 37 cases of suicide or attempted suicide by children. (**Public Prosecution of the State of Palestine, Ninth Annual Report, 2018**). What is striking in these figures is that the rate of suicide or attempted suicide, whether for adults or children, was much higher among females than among males. The percentage of adult females (71%) was twice that of males (29%). In the case of children, the percentage was very high among females (95%) compared to males (5%). This raises many questions about the reasons for high rates of suicide or suicide attempts by females. It indicates, in the final analysis, the size and nature of the pressures that females are exposed to compared to males. It also gives legitimacy to the question of whether it is "suicide" or "self-destruction" (meaning pressure on the woman to commit suicide), whether directly or indirectly due to the overwhelming nature of the economic and social difficulties faced by females compared to males.

6) Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*, translated by Hassan Odeh, published by the Syrian Public Book Authority, Ministry of Culture, Damascus, 2011.

The question is how to explain the phenomenon in our society, especially in relation to femicide, and the figures cited above. The concept of suicide in this context and socially comprises several possibilities about the person who commits suicide. There are the evident features, and there is a second possibility that pressure was exerted on the individual to force them to commit suicide, such as forcing them to jump from a high place or to drink a deadly poison. The third possibility is to put the individual under intense pressure socially and psychologically so that they attempt to redeem themselves by ending their own lives.

These scenarios remain a possibility but require a high level of «collusion» from the surrounding society to conceal the facts and maintain the façade of «suicide» by closing the door on those attempting to uncover the truth.

This is not a purely theoretical perspective. There are many indicators that support this interpretation of the social context in the debate about the phenomenon of femicide, including the growing numbers of women classified under this category. We do not aim here to question or challenge any information obtained by the relevant authorities but to examine the possibilities without denying or proving them. This is especially important when the discussion involves a controversial issue such as femicide which still finds clear and unambiguous support.

In our investigations into possible motives, and driven by the fact that the figures support the questions we raise in this analysis, evidence came to light that nearly half of the murder victims documented by us (46%) had been subjected to various forms of violence in the period preceding the murder. Even when we excluded cases classified as suicide, accidental death and natural deaths, almost half of those killed died in the social and family framework closest to the victim, as shown in Chart 11. That social network is the one most capable of revealing and/or concealing facts and evidence about the circumstances, conditions, and details of the murder. In general, this network tends to first cover up the event and close the matter as soon as possible, and second, protects anyone from the social framework from accusations and punishment.

We apply a social interpretation and proceed from that since the phenomenon of killing women is a social issue. In the three possibilities related to analysis of a suicide, there is a societal responsibility from two sides, namely that society in general is responsible for the lives of its members and citizens, regardless of their gender, class or any other discriminatory consideration. This is in addition to the right of the individual to enjoy a free and decent life without psychologi-

cal, social and economic pressures that may have a negative effect and push some individuals to end their lives. This is what we have previously called the concept of femicide.[7] The other important aspect in the role of society and its institutions is the exhaustion of all means to reveal the truth about a suicide and not to allow any individual a "justification" for killing another person.

During the documentation process, field researchers have often raised questions about the circumstances and conditions of cases classified as suicide. Sometimes, the entire context in which the victim lived and the circumstances of her "suicide" are excluded despite reasonable evidence to raise questions. The sociologist Durkheim, who wrote research on suicide, stated: "People often refer in conversations to the word suicide so it can be thought that its meaning is known to everyone and that its definition is useless. However, the words of the language used are like the concepts that express it." It is often ambiguous in reality. It means that any case may be registered as a suicide in order to close the case without an in-depth investigation. This may be a means to hide the motives for the killing or "deception" in the absence of a law to redress the victim.

Are there other reasons for suicide?

Are there blackmail cases or blackmail attempts?

According the Public Prosecution's report of 2021, Cybercrime statistics were 1,732 cases in 2021 , (97%), were referred and the rest were recycled. Of these, (1723) are misdemeanours, and (18) are felonies.

The percentage of Complainants were 68% male and 32% female. The legal charges comprised 224 crimes of internet extortion, 619 charges of slander and defamation, (1129) threat"

A total of 1725 cases were referred to the Family Protection Unit, of which 170 had been filed in the previous year and 93% had been resolved. The most prominent cases received by the public prosecution office were as follows:

Adultery (7), rape (11), indecent assault (53), attempted suicide (192), suicide (4), indecent acts (132), defloration of the hymen (11), abortion (2), Disruption of the marital bond (70), incest (1), violation of guardianship of a minor (19), and failure to protect a child (15).

7) WCLAC report: *Femicide in Time of Corona*, p. 66.

Legal amendments

Feminist and human rights organizations have always linked the phenomenon of femicide to its roots in society. There has been frequent discourse about the traditional societal culture based on discrimination against women that is used to justify violence against them, including murder. Additionally, there has been extensive discussion of the way that this culture is reflected in existing legislation, especially in our penal laws that include articles permitting the killing of women for what has been termed "excuses and extenuating excuses." These legal texts allow the killing of women in specific circumstances, often linked to the concept of "defending family honour," and mitigate the punishment of the murderer in such cases.

For many years, feminist and human rights organizations have been campaigning for changes in laws that currently include articles providing justifications or excuses for femicide. These articles may undermine the seriousness of the crime or provide legal grounds that allow perpetrators to escape appropriate punishment. The objective of these campaigns is to eradicate such articles and create a legal framework that recognizes femicide as a grave offense.

The Palestinian President issued a number of decisions and presidential decrees amending and/or annulling some articles and legal texts in the Penal Code and the Personal Status Law. These have contributed to reducing violence against women. In the Penal Code, Article 340 of Law No. 16 of 1960, and Article 18 of the British Mandate Law of 1936 in the Gaza Strip were annulled. Decree Law No. 10 of 2014 regarding the amendment of Penal Code No. 16 of 1960, specifically Article 98 thereof, stipulated the following: "The text of Article 98 of Penal Code No. 16 of 1960 and its amendments has been amended as follows: 'The perpetrator of a crime who committed it in a fit of anger as a result of an unjustified and dangerous act committed by the victim shall benefit from the excuse of mitigation. The perpetrator of the crime does not benefit from this mitigating excuse if the act was committed against a female for reasons of honour.'" Law No. 5 of 2018 amended Article (99). Judges are prohibited from imposing mitigated penalties for serious crimes such as the killing of women and children according to a new paragraph, No.5, as follows: "Excluded from the provisions of the previous paragraphs are crimes committed against women and children [8]».

8) A report from WCLAC in partnership with the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Forum to Combat Violence Against Women submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on Combating Violence against Women, available on WCLAC's website in English at the link: https://www.wclac.org/Library/203/Femicide_in_the_Palestinian_Society

Were these legal changes and amendments responsible for the shift in the concepts used to monitor cases of femicide?

In 2019 the Palestinian police announced that Palestine was free of "honour" killings, and that the police had not recorded any cases of femicide on the grounds of honour during that period. However, it is clear that if Palestine were truly free of crimes on the grounds of honour, the killing of women would not still be taking place. The majority of femicide crimes were usually linked to the concept of honour as a «mitigating excuse.» Some killings of women were justified on the grounds of the honour defence even if this was not the reason for the crime but because it would allow the murderer an excuse.

In the wake of the legal amendments, the reality of punishment has changed in cases of femicide. The most common example that can be cited in this field is the murder of Mrs. S.H. which received public and court interest for years. The murderer received a reduced sentence for the crime of killing his wife as a result of his claim that the killing was in the name of honour. He served a reduced sentence of nearly two years but that was not the end of the case because there was a retrial after the end of the sentence and the murderer's release. The prosecution appealed the verdict and the case was referred to the Court of Appeal and the Court of Cassation, which finally sentenced the killer to a fifteen-year sentence.[9] The argument in the case was that the murder had been committed after the amendments made to the Penal Code which excluded honour crimes from a reduced sentence. Therefore, the penalty should not have been reduced for the murderer. Did this case, followed avidly by the media and public opinion, really change perceptions of femicide? Previously, it was sufficient for the murderer to stand before the judge and plead that he had been prompted to kill to defend family honour, whatever the real reasons for the killing may have been, and a lengthy litigation process would attempt to prove the claim that the woman›s behaviour had violated the family›s honour. In such cases, a murderer motivated for some reason to commit this act is ultimately rewarded with a reduced sentence that signals to him that what he did was justified, acceptable, and even desirable within the framework of societal culture and its reflection in the law. Following the trial of the murderer of S.H., the number of women whose murders were classified under the reason of honour changed with the result that the police announced 2019 to be a year free of honour crimes. This may actually be what happened, yet Palestine was not free of murdered women and there was an increase in the suicide of Palestinian women. Did all these Palestinian women really commit suicide?

9) See the legal analysis of decisions issued in Criminal Case No. 108/2014 in the WCLAC study *Discrimination and Violence against Women: Fertile Soil for Murder*, page 55.

The fate of the children of victims

According to Table 7 and Chart 8 above, the 29 victims left behind 59 children. The number of children in each case ranged from one to eight children. Without going into the details of many theories related to the economic, social, health, psychological, and educational impact, many questions arise about the fate of these children. Rather than discuss the results of studies on this topic, we simply pose the following questions related to the challenges faced by all societal institutions, and which they have a duty to answer.

Where will these children live? Especially if the murderer is a family member (husband, son, father, brother).

How will their personalities and psyches be shaped in light of such a tragic event?

How will their feelings and behaviour be towards everyone around them?

Who will take care of them economically and socially?

Will their lives be normal or will they live an abnormal life?

How will their lives and relationships be with others?

Are there community institutions that will provide them with specific care? What are the aspects of that care?

How will the community around them behave towards them?

Will society accept these children or will they carry a social stigma that may haunt them throughout their lives?

Does the violence they experienced reflect the composition and features of their personalities in the future?

Will some of them engage in violence with their surroundings?

Will others suffer the same violence?

Is there a threat to the lives of any of them at present or in the future?

Psychosocial effects on women

Perhaps the most important negative repercussions of the killing of women are felt by other women in various fields. A research paper by Tahani Al-Qassem on the effects of killing on women in the Gaza Strip, entitled Women's Murders and Suicides: Causes and Effects, enumerates a series of effects based on an interview conducted with psychiatrist Sarah Al-Wahidi. Tahani wrote: "It may be difficult to limit the effects of femicide on women because the manifestations are many and multiple. Nonetheless, we can state the most important, clear and prominent effects on the psychological and mental health of women. (This does not mean that women are exposed to all of them but they may be exposed to one of these manifestations.) Feelings may include loss of self-confidence and self-respect, or feelings of guilt about the killing of a sister or daughter. In addition, there are feelings of dependency, frustration, gloom, psychological isolation, and helplessness or weakness. There can also be constant fear, tension, anxiety and panic, with feelings of humiliation and disgrace, a lack of reassurance and psychological and mental integrity, mental health disorders, and loss of initiative and decision making.

"There is no doubt that these psychological effects, or some of them, lead to psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), impulsiveness, and nightmares. Fear of engaging in actions that may lead to abuse, whether mental or physical, may lead to loss of appetite, circulatory disorders, stomach or pancreas disorders, aches and pains, headaches, etc. [10]

"The social effects on women are particularly severe and prominent. They may be limited to divorce and family disintegration, poor and disturbed relations between the families of the killer and the victim in the event that the victim is married, and aggressiveness and violence by children of the family if the victim is the mother or the sister. Other social effects include the inability to raise the children and ensure their upbringing in a balanced psychological and social manner, plus lack of participation in social activities and events due to stigma or shame, as defined by society, towards the victim's sisters and family. Therefore, the roles of women in society differ after a woman from that family has been killed or committed suicide. As the woman's role in building the family and caring for children declines, she will lose the motivation to preserve the happiness of her family or restore its stability to the highest level possible." [11]

10) Tahani Qassem and Wafaa Helles, *Murder and Suicide of Women: Causes and Effects*, a research paper submitted to the Women's Affairs Center, Gaza, Palestine, 2018. Published on the link: https//:shortest.link/hIF9

11) Tahani Qassem and Wafaa Helles. Ibid.

Protecting the family from violence

This has been one of the most important areas of WCLAC's work and that of other feminist and human rights organizations over many years. Discrimination and violence against women, including the most severe form of assault on a woman's right to life, is a key danger that threatens the stability of the Palestinian family and community cohesion. During the last ten years, many advocacy campaigns were conducted to push for the adoption of the Family Protection from Violence Law. This was developed and presented as draft legislation by WCLAC with its governmental and civil partners more than ten years ago and is still pending. The advocacy campaign includes official figures and statistics provided by governmental and non-governmental institutions working in the field of defending women, the family and their rights, including the results of the documentation of the killing of women.

The paradox is that, today, this issue constitutes the headline in organized campaigns of defamation conducted by some social and political groups who refuse the implementation of this law.

It is not difficult to prove that these groups that espouse traditional beliefs based on discrimination, violence and the oppression of women, are actually working to dismantle the family and the social fabric. The figures we cited above are clear evidence of the size and extent of the need to legislate the Family Protection from Violence Act, not only to protect women but the entire family with all its components. We saw above that there are 59 children who will grow up in unstable family conditions after the killing of their mother. Most community institutions are aware of the fate of these children and the challenges that their circumstances create for social, health, economic, and other institutions.

It goes without saying that the Family Protection from Violence law not only aims to punish the killer and abuser but establishes rules and regulations to rehabilitate the abuser as a member of a traditional culture that no longer serves the progress and development of society. We have also seen above that the murderer, in most cases, is from the close family network of the victim, a network that is normally a source of support and protection for all family members.

It is strange that some choose to deny even the existence of violence, discrimination, and murder. They bury their heads in the sand while different social institutions seek solutions and treatment for violence in all its forms, and its repercussions on families, society, and institutions.

Methodology related to violence and killings

In more than one previous study, we have referred to discrepancies in the statistics issued by official and civil bodies on violence and the killing of women. Here we reiterate that these discrepancies still exist because the monitoring process and its methodology have not yet been systemized.

One of the most important lessons of documentation and analysis is that the monitoring process must be continued and expanded through national organizations with efforts to develop the methods and resources used[12].

12) WCLAC report *The Killing of Women in the Time of Corona*, p. 68.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Most of the recommendations that we proposed in previous studies are still valid given that very little progress has been made in achieving them. [13]

Recommendations regarding monitoring and documenting

- Continue efforts of monitoring and documenting, and issue periodic analytical reports on the results.
- Work to create a unified and integrated monitoring process.
- Expand the scope of monitoring to include follow-up of trial procedures in murder cases and analysis of judgments from a feminist perspective to enhance women's access to justice.
- Conduct a comprehensive and analytical study of murder cases monitored during the last twenty years, and link them to changes occurring at the legal and social levels during the same period. This will enable examination of the impact of procedures and the changes that have taken place in combating the phenomenon of femicide.
- Define a unified mechanism to monitor, document, study and analyze femicide, and push for the adoption of this mechanism and its dissemination at the national level
- Identify means to regulate relationships between researchers who monitor and document femicide, and with the relevant official authorities. This would enable the exchange of experiences and skills in monitoring, documentation and the follow-up of cases of femicide.

Recommendations in the legal field

- Continue to work for the consecration and embodiment of the principle of equality as stipulated in Palestinian texts, foremost of which is the Declaration of the Independence of Palestine and the Palestinian Basic Law.
- Continue to work for the publication of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) in the Official Gazette of the Palestinian Authority, and to confirm the precedence of the Convention over national legislation.

13) WCLAC studies *Women's Murder in the Time of Corona* and *Discrimination and Violence against Women: The Fertile Soil of Murder*. These studies can be found and downloaded on the WCLAC website at the link: https://www.wclac.org/Library/All?C=4

- Continue to demand the harmonization of Palestinian legislation with state obligations and pledges in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) and other international treaties and covenants to which the State of Palestine has acceded.
- Continue to work for the adoption of the Family Protection from Violence Law, the Palestinian Penal Code, and a modern Palestinian personal status law compatible with the requirements of equality for women in all aspects of life.
- Confront the campaigns of hostile incitement launched by specific political and social groups against feminist and human rights institutions, and devote more efforts to refuting their hostile rhetoric.
- Continue to campaign for legislation that promotes equality and supports the empowerment of women in the economic, political, social, and other fields. For example, a law that regulates joint ownership of assets between spouses after marriage, and the creation of an inheritance department to enhance women›s access to their inheritance rights.

Recommendations regarding systems and procedures

- Develop a strategy to reintegrate victims of violence and monitor their status after they return to their families to ensure that violence is not repeated.
- Conduct a gender-based review of working procedures used in official agencies and institutions specialized in gender issues to increase sensitivity in dealing with femicide cases.
- Review the procedures for releasing battered women from shelters and search for effective guarantees to protect women after their release.
- Identify means to organize the relationship between researchers documenting femicide and the relevant official authorities that would enable the exchange of experience and skills in documenting and following up of cases of femicide.

Recommendations regarding awareness, education and training

- Expand awareness and education programs for different social groups, not only for women, about the issue of femicide and its negative repercussions on women, institutions and all sectors of society. Create incentives to encourage the engagement of males in these programs.
- Continue to organize training and qualification courses for field workers in official and unofficial institutions on documenting the killing of women.
- Organize training for media workers to increase awareness and qualify them to play a broader role in educating and spreading a culture of equality that opposes the killing of women. This will contribute to eradication of this phenomenon.
- Organize ongoing training programs for workers in official institutions engaged in combating gender-based violence, such as the Family Protection Unit in the police and the public prosecution. Increase their understanding and raise awareness about women’s and gender issues during their work to pursue cases of violence and the killing of women.
- Organize specialized awareness and training programs for judges and those working in the judicial system about gender-based violence, how it occurs and how to confront it, and the promotion of equality and non-discrimination in judicial rulings.

Selected Cases

No. 1

The victim (A.S.) was in her forties, single, socially challenged, and had weak mental abilities. Over a period of more than two years, she was subjected to acts of violence and violations of her rights. The most severe of these violations was a sexual assault on her. (There are many indications that it was a repeated assault by more than one person. She was not aware of the seriousness of the situation.) This led to pregnancy and necessitated her admission to a safe house, where she gave birth. She was released to the family home following a case conference in which several individuals pledged not to harm her. However, she continued to suffer violence and violation of her rights in the family home. Some witnesses stated that before the woman's death, they sometimes saw children torturing her, tying her with ropes and hitting her with stones until she bled. Her family later informed the police of her suicide at the family home and the police transferred the body to the hospital. A forensic doctor indicated in his report that the cause of death was strangulation with a rope before twisting her neck, which severed the spinal cord, causing death instantly. The police are searching for one of her relatives on suspicion of killing her but he remains on the run.

No. 2

The girl (S.H.) was eighteen years old, had finished high school, and had recently enrolled at university.. She had several brothers and sisters, but her mother was not in the country. Her father was not at home at the time of the incident. The doctor who examined the body stated that criminal activity was suspected as there were traces of bruises and severe beatings on the victim's body. The case was presented as a suicide under the pretext that she had undergone an electric shock.

Although the family had a criminal record of rape and drug trafficking, the police released her brothers after notables and social leaders paid bail. This family was known to follow closed tribal customs and to conceal any events within the family. The girl was buried and a funeral was organized for her. Earlier, another girl from the same family committed suicide due to the violence, beating, and ill-treatment that she suffered.

No. 3

Mrs. N.A. was 31 years old and a mother of four children when she was killed by her husband (M.Y.) aged 36. He beat her severely which led to a fracture in the rib cage and blows to the head caused severe internal bleeding. Her sister said that the husband beat the woman with the intention of killing her. The family lawyer quoted testimony by the children of the victim about family disputes prior to the crime. He stated that the husband had previously been violent and had beaten his wife more than once, but the victim had endured the pain to remain within her family. She did not want to cause her children to be dispersed as there was no breadwinner or support for them other than their father.

The lawyer stated, «The victim could not bear what the husband did, the beatings and humiliation. She went to her family›s home after the husband persisted in assaulting and beating her and filed a complaint against him with the police. The police arrested the husband after an investigation and a medical report on the victim›s condition. The husband's family contacted the wife's family, through mediators, to ensure the release of the husband and to get the wife returned to her husband's house. Although the woman's family refused the mediators' requests and insisted on asking for a divorce, pressure from the mediators and the intervention of many parties led to the woman returning to her husband in return for a pledge by the husband and the mediators not to repeat the assault."

The victim's brother stated: "The husband pledged in an official paper signed by sponsors not to repeat the beating. The wife gave up the case and returned home after staying for three months in her family's house. It appears that the husband was intending to take revenge for her complaint against him and he prevented the wife from leaving her apartment, even to dry clothes or entertain the children. One day, a quarrel occurred between the husband and one of his daughters (from his ex-wife) and the father beat her. When the victim intervened, we found him brutally beating her. She tried to get out of the house to go to her family but the husband prevented her by tying her hands and throwing her on the ground before he left the house. He did not provide her with any aid for an hour and a half, during which she and her children were crying out for help. After he left the house, the children untied their mother and tried to help her but she was unable to respond to them. When the murderer husband returned, he summoned his brother after seeing his wife in that condition. When his brother inspected her, she was dead."

The ambulance came and they found the marks of handcuffs on her hands. The paramedics did not move the body and contacted the relevant authorities: the police, prosecution, forensics and all competent specialists attended. The police took the murderer for investigation; he denied it at first but when confronted with the statements of his children, he admitted his crime.

The public prosecutor in the Gaza Strip promised a speedy process and sound investigation of the murder to ensure an equitable verdict that would incorpo-

rate prompt justice, public deterrence, the rule of law, and to reassure society and stabilize security.

On Thursday May 19, 2022, the Major Crimes Court unanimously issued a death sentence of hanging against the murderer on the charge of intentional murder, based on Penal Code No. 74 of 1936. The ruling was based on evidence provided by the prosecution and after due legal process in which the accused was allowed the right to a defense, to present evidence, and to hear the pleadings of his lawyer.

No. 4

Mrs. B.T. was 21 years old and a mother of two children. She poured gasoline over her body and burned herself after being threatened with defamation by her husband. At the time of the incident, she was living in her family's house after being severely beaten by her husband. She used to leave her husband's house to go to her family home every time she was beaten and humiliated by the husband, but under pressure from the family, she would return to her husband. She used to return because she believed that it was normal and acceptable to be beaten by a husband, and this encouraged the husband to persist in beating and insulting her.

B.T. came from a family that espoused traditional norms and customs, the belief that girls should not be educated, and that a woman must accept the first groom who proposes to her. These customs were imposed on the woman, who was married at the age of 14 to live a life of beating, violence and humiliation by the husband, abetted by a cloak of silence or complicity by her family who turned against her on every occasion. She was always forced to return under pressure from her family.

On the last occasion, she faced pressure from her husband who threatened to publish photos of her if she did not return to him. She was afraid to return because she knew what awaited her: violence, beatings and humiliation. She was also afraid of the husband's threats and that he would actually publish pictures of her. She was worried that her pictures would reach her father as she was concerned about his health and that he would have a stroke. Her father suffered from diabetes and was not sympathetic to his daughter's to divorce her husband. Her mother and sisters suffer from a sense of shock because of the incident. They also feel guilty that they were unable to provide the woman with help and support when she had resorted to the family home to protect her from violence and humiliation.

No. 5

A.S. was a four-year-old girl. Her neighbours brought her to the hospital without a member from her family being with them. The girl had been shot in the head and the injury showed the entry and exit of a bullet injury. Investigations indicated that the mother had been playing with the father's Kalashnikov during his absence. Bullets fired from the weapon, three of which hit the child and killed her instantly. According to sources, the father accused the mother of being ill and immediately divorced her. He disowned her family and refused to allow them to attend the burial and funeral ceremonies for the child. The relevant authorities made no official statement.

No. 6

F.H. was fifty-four years old. One of the neighbours described her as "loving everyone and her neighbours, kind-hearted." She had nine brothers and sisters, and spent her youth raising her brothers from an early age until they grew up and got married. She lived in a family house which had several apartments. She tried to fill her mother's place and acted like a sister for the mother in an attempt to preserve family unity. Thus, she never married.

Family disputes arose constantly between the brothers. It became an extended family after some of their children married and lived in the same building. Problems and disagreements increased, even due to small issues such as cleaning the stairwell of the building or children's toys. This increased pressure on F.H. who attempted to reconcile the brothers on every occasion to keep the family united.

One day in Ramadan, a major dispute broke out shortly before the time of the Maghreb call to prayer between the brothers and their sons and wives. They used sticks and stones against each other, but this time things did not end as usual with the intervention of neighbours and reconciliation between the brothers and their families. There was a completely different ending. During her desperate intervention and pleas to resolve the conflict between her brothers, F.H. was beaten and kicked, then she was hit with a large stone that fell directly on her head. She was dragged along the ground covered in blood. The neighbours rushed to take her to the hospital, where it was found that she had died.

No. 7

The victim was killed by the husband of her cousin. The nine-year-old girl (Y.D.) was deliberately killed with a firearm. A family dispute occurred between a man from the military (J.Q. aged 28) and his wife (B.D.), the cousin of the victim. Following the dispute, B.D. went to her family's home. She stayed there for several days and during that time, she went on a trip with her children and family to the sea. When the husband found out, he objected because his wife had taken

the children without his permission and he went to the wife's family house in an attempt to take his daughter from her mother. A verbal altercation broke out which led to the intervention of the wife's brother who prevented the husband from taking the child by force. The husband threatened the family that he would take revenge on them and went to his house to collect his Kalashnikov machine gun. He returned with some armed members of his family and they started shooting randomly at the house and at passers-by in the street. As a result, 15 family members, neighbours, and passers-by were shot, some of them seriously, including the child (Y.D), who died of her injury.

Sources stated that the murderer had previously been involved in shooting incidents and it was recorded that he had attacked his sister and fired three bullets inside her bedroom.

No. 8

D.N., aged 12, was brought to the hospital and the forensic report stated that there were marks of beating and suffocation on her body. The police did not open an investigation into the incident and no individual was charged or arrested. Two days later, the authorities reported in a brief statement that the rope of the swing in her home had been wrapped around her neck and caused her death. The researcher was unable to obtain any information about the circumstances of the death from the girl's social network because of refusals to discuss the matter. The family simply said that the incident was an issue of fate.

The information obtained by the researcher from many sources revealed that they were surprised that the victim had a swing at her house.

No. 9

S.A. was single and 18 years old. She was taken to the hospital at midnight, and after examining her, the doctors confirmed her death. The police opened an investigation into the incident and referred the body for an autopsy. The police summoned a number of family members to hear their statements. The police released them without bringing any charges against them on the grounds that there was no criminal suspicion. The forensic investigation confirmed that the death resulted from suicide by tying a cloth around the neck in a circular fashion. Interviews were conducted and information was collected from several parties and relevant sources, all of which confirmed that the girl committed suicide in her room at her family home. The researcher visited the family home and conducted separate interviews with each family member. All the researcher's observations confirmed the accuracy of the information provided, and that there were no reasons or indications to doubt the information about the circumstances of the case.

Perhaps the information that draws attention is the agreement of all the testimonies from the family that the girl was calm and loved, and was very keen to help her mother. She used to stay at the house and had never been involved in any problems with relatives. Nonetheless, it was noticed that she was nervous while waiting for the results of the secondary school exams. She changed two days before her death, appeared very nervous and withdrawn in her room, and refused to eat. The family tried on several occasions (such as the day of Eid) to get out of her room and receive well-wishers on the holiday with the rest of the family, but she screamed, appeared tense, and refused to leave her room.

No. 10

G.K. was a single 23-year-old who held a bachelor's degree and gave students private lessons at home. She was taken to the hospital with a head injury. Attempts to stop the bleeding and resuscitate her failed, and she was pronounced dead about half an hour after her arrival at the hospital due to bleeding to her head. The family reported that the girl had been hit by shrapnel that hit her head when a bullet was fired from a weapon belonging to a member of the family that hung in the kitchen of the family's home. The girl had gone to the kitchen to drink water when the family members heard the sound of a bullet. When the girl's sister went to check the source of the sound, they found G.K. on the bed of her room with bleeding from her head.

While her brother, father, and other relatives rushed to take the girl to the hospital, the mother, sister, and some female neighbours cleaned the house of traces of blood. This aroused the attention of the police who arrived at the place after some time.

According to information obtained by the researcher from several sources, some of them from the family, there was no autopsy on the body and the girl was buried immediately. A mourning event was held for her for three days. The police investigated and one week after the incident, the father›s brother was arrested for several days before being released. The official version of the story was that the girl died when she was cleaning the weapon. Although some of the information obtained by the researcher, supported with documents, revealed that the girl was familiar with weapons because a relative worked in a security agency and she had previously trained with them in the use of weapons, the researcher was not able to see any official medical reports about the death.

There are questions (raised with the researcher by several parties) about how the girl was accidentally hit by a bullet when the information indicated that she was proficient in using firearms.

No. 11

Mrs. K.Q. was a married woman in her forties. She was taken to hospital in a

critical condition and was pronounced dead about an hour after her arrival. The police opened an investigation into the incident and arrested her father and some of her brothers. It was found that there were signs of beatings all over her body. The researcher was not able to meet or talk to any of the family members, nor was she able to obtain any information from the official authorities. The woman had been suffering from marital problems and had left her husband's house and moved to a house close to her family.

No. 12

Mrs. H.A. was married, in her early forties, and left behind eight children aged from four to 24 years. She suffered a bullet injury to the chest with the bullet exiting from the back. She was taken to hospital and was pronounced dead. The police opened an investigation and arrested one of her sons (aged 24) for interrogation. He admitted that while he was cleaning his weapon, a bullet had been fired by accident and hit his mother. His father (the husband) waived his rights and the investigation ended with a charge of manslaughter.

No. 13

Mrs. S.T. was thirty-four years old, married, held a bachelor's degree, and had four children aged from two to 11 years. She was subjected to beatings, violence, insults, abuse and threats from her husband for a long period of time. The husband was an alcoholic and had a criminal record for drug possession and wife-beating. From the first days of the marriage, S.T. went several times to the police but they did not succeed in finding a suitable solution to stop the husband's violence. She appealed to her family several times but ultimately returned to the husband's house because she rejected the idea of divorce in order to keep her children. On one occasion, the husband beat her relatives and injured them when they tried to defend and protect her from his assault. She did not respond to her family's requests to divorce him. On the contrary, she assisted him in the hope that she would stop his attacks. She even assigned a lawyer to defend him when the occupation police caught him buying drugs and paid bail to get him out of prison.

During the last year before her murder, the wife left her husband›s house and lived in a rented house with her children. She was the one who covered the family›s living expenses; sometimes the husband even took money from her to buy drugs. Before her death, the husband asked her not to go to work and to stay at home. He threatened her that he would burn her. When she went to the store where she worked, her children came to warn her that their father had bought an axe to attack her. She left the store and filed a complaint with the police, but her husband called her to say that he was holding one of their sons and would kill him if she did not come. When the woman arrived, her husband spoke to her nicely and begged her to return to his home. She was convinced and went home with him.

The testimonies of the children, family, and the husband's mother indicate that the woman was killed in a horrible manner with her facial features mutilated by an axe.

No. 14

Mrs. S.T., in her late forties, was educated and worked as a principal of a local school.. She had persevered and struggled throughout her life, and was the member of a distinguished family. The suspect was her son (R.H.) who graduated with a Bachelor of Laws and used to work in a law firm. Mrs. S.T. married at an early age and within two years, obtained a divorce from her husband as he suffered from mental illness. He was later admitted to a psychiatric clinic. S.T. had given birth to her only child who she insisted on raising, educating, and taking great care of. She bought a house to live in with her child and refused to marry again, devoting her life to her profession and to raising her son. The son seemed bright in his studies, and at certain stages of her life, the mother was inclined to be isolated with her son and conceal the details of their lives. However, there were rumours about her son's engagement, which was later broken off by his fiancée's relatives who complained about his "unbalanced personality." The mother remained secretive about all these details, even to her closest friends and relatives. Before the murder, she was subjected to violence from her son who beat her and burned her house. A relative organized a medical examination of the young man's health, which led to his admission to a psychiatric clinic. His mother exerted all her efforts to get her son out of the psychiatrist hospital and brought him back to live with her. She pledged that she would take care of treating his condition. She became more secretive and isolated from her surroundings.

More than a year before her murder, her son finished work at the law firm. He gave the pretext of devoting himself to caring for his mother and he accompanied her everywhere, even when she went to work and back. He used to drive her in his car and wait until her work ended to take her back home. On the day of the incident, the son hit his mother with a heavy object and then stabbed her. He gouged out her eyes and left her dead. He went to a restaurant and entered the bathroom to wash the traces of blood off his clothes. This caught the attention of the restaurant workers and the police were called. They arrested him.

Police and prosecution investigations and forensic reports indicated that the mother died from being hit on the head with a heavy instrument (wrench) and of 40 stab wounds throughout her body. The son was tried and was referred to a specialist medical committee to determine his condition. The conclusion of the committee was that the murderer suffered from a genetic disease with mental defects and severe schizophrenia. He was referred for treatment to Bethlehem Hospital for mental illness.

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