



SUPPORTING ARAB WOMEN AT THE TABLE (SAWT)

RESOLUTION 1325 THROUGH THE EYES OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN

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Supporting
Arab Women
at the Table



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About the Arab Reform Initiative

The Arab Reform Initiative is an independent Arab think tank working with expert partners in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change and social justice. It conducts research and policy analysis and provides a platform for inspirational voices based on the principles of diversity, impartiality, and gender equality.

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Cover Photo: A volunteer of The Culture & Free Thought Association gives roses to a Palestinian woman on the 8th March International Women's Day in Gaza City, Gaza, 08 March 2022. © Ali Jadallah/Anadolu Images
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Introduction

The Culture & Free Thought Association – Wissal Network

The current, global reality for women and girls indicates that they are the most-affected victims of armed conflicts, directly and indirectly, whether before, during, or after. More than twenty years after the passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (Resolution 1325), which garnered international recognition, the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda remains the cornerstone for building more just and prosperous human societies. However, Resolution 1325 remains ink on paper. Over the past twenty years, it has become clear that the efforts made by countries have not been enough to ensure a just world that has achieved gender equality. Numerous speeches still echo through the halls and corridors of the United Nations but have failed to effect positive change on the experiences of women and girls in several regions across the world.

The Arab region is no different, especially in the countries where the so-called Arab Spring took place. These countries have always experienced divisions and civil wars that have victimized women and children of both sexes. The Palestinian experience in particular cannot be considered separately from the people's daily endurance of the Israeli occupation, whether in the West Bank, Jerusalem, or the Gaza Strip, even if the particulars of their experiences take on different forms in the various Palestinian communities. The Palestinian political division and the catastrophic multi-level effects on the reality in Palestine cannot go unnoticed, especially in light of the high rates of unemployment and poverty, the decline of the civil peace system, and the disruption of the Legislative Council, whose legal mandate has ended according to the law due to the political division. The cumulative effect is, unsurprisingly, Palestinian policymakers' inability to develop policies and procedures to implement Resolution 1325.

One of the main aspects of the philosophy of knowledge building aims to see and understand the world through various perspectives. In our study, we seek to understand the experiences of women who suffer from discrimination by integrating theoretical knowledge with practice; it is our belief that the discrimination against women, and their exclusion from different friends, limits our ability to fully understand the problems facing a society, and that women's experiences could open our eyes to new methods of pursuing solutions to existing problems. In fact, the incorporating the concrete experiences of women enhances credibility in fact-finding processes. The study examines and analyzes Resolution 1325 through the eyes of women, discusses the reality of Resolution 1325 in the Palestinian territories, and sheds light on the four principles enshrined in the resolution: protection, relief and recovery, accountability, and political participation.

Methodological Framework of the Study

This study sought to research and examine the perspectives of Palestinian women with regards to Resolution 1325, to achieve the following objectives:

- Learn the extent to which Palestinian women have accessed their rights in the fields of political participation, protection, and recovery.
- Determine how to hold accountable all parties that violate the provisions of the resolution, as violations and discrimination are rife in Palestine. They are practiced on one hand by the Israeli occupation, which exercises all forms of discrimination and violation of the rights of women and girls in contradiction with the provisions of the resolution, and on the other by the Palestinian National Authority (PA) via its patriarchal practices.
- Discover both the practices of the patriarchy that promote exclusionary and discriminatory practices against women's rights, as well as the women's perspective with regards to how Resolution 1325 can be localized in light of the political circumstances in Palestine.

The main problem discussed in the study is that Palestinian women still face exclusion and discrimination more than two decades after the adoption of Resolution 1325, which calls for the participation of women in decision-making positions, particularly those related to finding solutions and building peace. This is particularly important given the increasing number of female war victims. According to statistics, Palestinian women face hardships in all life circumstances due to the political and social reality they live in: the repressive policies and practices of the occupation, which contradicts the provisions of Resolution 1325, as well as the exclusionary policies of the PA.

This study seeks to answer the primary question: twenty years after the adoption of Resolution 1325, how do Palestinian women view its implementation? New methodological techniques were used in the study, such as proactive input, which encourages the participation of respondents in formulating their ideas and reflecting on their experiences, ideas, and feelings. We tried to move away from the traditional interview technique, and move towards a methodology that puts women's experiences as the basis of the research and study, and an entry point to accessing new knowledge.¹

The research team adopted the philosophy and practices of feminist research, which is founded on the study of intellectual and social structures and ideologies that are based in the oppression of and injustice faced by women. Taking into account the multiplicity of experiences and cultures of the female respondents, the research team used multiple approaches from feminist research that aim to identify the reality of Resolution 1325's implementation from a Palestinian feminist perspective by adopting many research tools usually utilized in the preparation of feminist studies, such as in-depth interviews, storytelling, and other tools that reflect a feminist perspective.

In preparing to conduct this research, the team relied on the descriptive analytical approach; we collected theoretical and factual information and data, analyzed them, and drew conclusions in order to formulate alternatives from a feminist perspective to address the main question tackled in this paper. Preliminary data was collected by reviewing the literature related to Resolution 1325 at the UN and national levels – such as the components of Resolution 1325 and other interpretative resolutions, the second generation of the Palestinian national plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325, the early recovery plan, the reconstruction process and the involvement of women, relevant official decisions and policies, the approaches of NGOs towards implementing Resolution 1325, and other international instruments with similar approaches in countries facing different conflicts. Information was also collected from secondary sources, through in-depth interviews with women from all regions of the State of Palestine.

The research team also tried to understand the implementation of Resolution 1325 through women's experiences; such understanding has played a vital role in forging a deeper awareness of women's lives and experiences alongside our existing

1 22 مدخل الى البحث النسوي، ممارسة وتطبيق، ص 22 (Introduction to Feminist Research, Practice and Application, p. 22)

3 Resolution 1325 Through the Eyes of Palestinian Women

awareness of the dominant group (i.e., men), which has caused the discrimination according to the women we spoke with. To this end, several in-depth interviews were conducted with women, women's rights activists, and others who faced patriarchal challenges (mainly in the form of patriarchal practices promoting discrimination and inequality). The research team also referred to video interviews with a group of decision-makers in the PA and the de facto government in Gaza in order to infer some facts and data, which sometimes indicate the presence of controversy between various parties involved in the process of implementing Resolution 1325.

The team conducted three types of interviews:

- Informal interviews, which had no set structure, aimed to build a relationship with the respondents by using open-ended questions.
- Semi-structured interviews, for which a special manual was prepared for the researcher that included a written list of questions that needed to be covered in the interview.
- Well-structured interviews, in which the interview agenda was fully dictated by the study. Therefore, the same questions, which were mostly closed, are asked to all the respondents, and in the same set order.

Resolution 1325's Theoretical Framework

Resolution 1325 is the first international resolution to recognize the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. It is also the first resolution to link the experience of women in conflict zones to the maintenance of international peace and security, and to recognize the contributions of women and girls to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peace-building. The resolution clearly references the importance of the active and equal participation of women and girls as powerful agents in building peace and security.

Resolution 1325 emphasizes the urgent need for the full implementation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law to protect the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts. The resolution called upon all relevant actors in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements to take gender perspectives into account. In the Palestinian context, the PA has sought to integrate and implement the accountability pillar within a tailored [National Action Plan \(link in Arabic\)](#) based on Resolution 1325. As such, this paper considers that the measures called for by Resolution 1325 focus on four pillars necessary for its implementation: active political participation, protection, accountability, and recovery.

This includes, inter alia:

1. General Measures

- Considering the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, specifically their need for post-conflict rehabilitation, reintegration, and reconstruction after the conflict has ended.
- Supporting women's local peace initiatives, conflict resolution processes by the population, and measures that involve women in all implementation processes of peace agreements.
- Ensuring the protection of and respect for the human rights of women and girls, in particular those relating to the constitution, the electoral system, the police, and the judiciary.

2. State-specific Measures (Participation and Recovery Measures)

- Urging UN Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all levels of decision-making in national, regional, and international institutions and mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and resolution.
- Increasing financial contributions and support for gender-sensitive training efforts.
- Applying gender mainstreaming in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements.

3. Measures Specific to Parties in Conflict (Protection and Accountability Measures)

- Ensuring full respect for international law regarding women's rights as civilians, in particular the Geneva Conventions and their annexes, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Refugee Convention.
- Taking measures to protect women from gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict, especially rape and other forms of sexual abuse.
- Holding accountable all perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, including crimes against women, and excluding these crimes from amnesty.
- Respecting the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements and taking into account the special needs of women.

Implementing Resolution 1325 in Palestine

Resolution 1325 is directed at countries in a state of conflict, whether for ethnic or sectarian reasons, including situations of political conflict and dispute. However, it neither mentions women under occupation, nor does it set a specific timeframe for its implementation. This is due to an understanding of the difficulties that may arise when trying to implement the resolution, and the complexities of finding quick solutions to conflict situations. The resolution is also plagued by a clear paradox: it urges women to participate in peace-making processes and entrusts them with a complex and difficult task such as achieving peace, thereby ignoring the marginalization of women, who are still excluded from war and peace decisions. It also fails to recognize the fact that those who wield all the power, influence, and decisions have failed to achieve peace.²

Resolution 1325 focuses on protecting women in conflict areas and providing them with security and peace. It provides an opportunity to remind the international community of both the need to provide protection for Palestinian women under Israeli occupation and hold the latter accountable for its crimes, while also highlighting the daily hardships faced by Palestinians and bringing their unique situation to the forefront. Women are in occupation prisons; they are refugees and farmers, and are present in Jerusalem, in Area C, in the Jordan Valley, and near the wall. It is imperative to implement the resolution in Palestine for the benefit of Palestinian women due to the peculiarities of their situation under Israeli occupation.³

Because of the unique nature of the Palestinian occupation, Resolution 1325 cannot be analyzed in the Palestinian context separately from the settlement of the Palestinian territories. Its analysis requires a breakdown of the overlap between the forms of historical, geographical, psychological, and physical violence exercised against women, which have forced Palestinian women to develop multiple forms of resistance and particular methods of retaking their political, civil, and economic rights as part of the multilevel struggle led by women and girls in Palestinian society. Women are working on two fronts: trying to regain their national rights, notably their right to life, their homeland, and freedom from occupation, while also striving in parallel to take back their right to participation, equality, and protection from the discrimination that results from their patriarchal society and within the minds of Palestinian decision-makers.

Within Palestinian society, political and societal actors emphasize the central role that women play in strengthening national resilience within the territory and protecting the Palestinian family unit from disintegration or collapse. These affirmations are especially notable during elections, as slogans to be chanted to court women's votes, or as part of routine political statements. In practice, however, these same political actors continue to ignore the political exclusion and marginalization of women in all regards; there are no efforts to increase women's political participation and enforcement of political rights, and women are not considered as part of the management of Palestinian reconciliation or when addressing the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip after Israeli aggression (the latest of which was in May 2021).⁴

The contradiction between the patriarchal Palestinian discourse and the practice on the ground is highlighted by the data provided by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2020), which make clear the significant gap in women's political participation as compared with Palestinian men. Women occupy very few decision-making positions compared to men, standing at only 5% of the members of the Palestinian Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization, 11% of the members of the National Council, 13% of the members of the Council of Ministers, and 11% of the ambassadors in the diplomatic corps. In addition, out of the 16 governors, only one is a woman; at the municipal level, there are no female mayors in the municipalities of Areas A and B – which is where the large and medium cities are located. As for the municipalities of Area C – comprised of small municipalities and village councils – there are only three female mayors, compared to 97 male mayors. Approximately 91% of the heads of trade unions registered in the Palestinian Ministry of Labor are men; men make up 96% of the members of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Palestine in 2019. Approximately 8% of Sharia judges in the West Bank are women. It is important to note here that even the most limited engagement of women is an indication that it is possible to increase their participation in this sector. Women comprise 71% of the members of the Sharia Prosecution compared to 29% for men for the year 2019. According to data from the Council of Civil Servants from February 2021, women constituted 45% of the total number of civil servants. However, there is a gap when it comes to civil servants with the rank of director general or higher, where only 14% are women.⁵

² Rima Nazzal, interviewed by authors.

³ From an interview with Dr. Amal Hamad on Nisaa FM radio on 2 November 2020

⁴ Mariam Shaqoura, Director of the Women's Health Center, interviewed by the authors.

⁵ Report issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, March 2020 on the occasion of Women's Day

The situation is not any different when it comes to participation in political parties, where the percentage of women participants compared to men remains low at all decision-making levels. Despite the Central Council's decision in 2014 to increase the participation rate of women by at least 30% across all Palestinian Liberation Organization institutions, and despite the prominent role played by women in these parties, they are still marginalized. For example, there is only one woman present in the Central Committee of Fatah, and only 12 in the Fatah Revolutionary Council. Women constituted 20% of the members of the Central Committee of the Popular Front, and 23% of the members of the Central Committee of the Democratic Front. The situation is similar in all Palestinian parties, from which we were unable to obtain data related to their members.⁶

Resolution 1325's implementation in Palestine highlights the impact on women of the strategies adopted by the state's political and economic powers. It also impacts the fight against totalitarianism, which aims not only to objectify Palestinian women, but also to perpetuate their marginalization through exercising complete control of the details of women's daily lives and, by extension, their existence as a whole.⁷

As for the violations committed by the Israeli occupation, the figures and statistics show that the occupation has deliberately targeted civilians and civilian spaces such as schools, hospitals, places of worship, and even citizens' homes, executing attacks in the Gaza Strip without warning, causing the death of hundreds of civilian children, women, and men who believed that being in their homes would protect them from shelling.

During the 2008 war, 1,436 people were killed, including 410 children, 104 women, and 100 elderly people, and 5,400 people were injured, most of them women and children. Similarly, in the 2012 war, women and children comprised most victims. 42 children and 11 women were killed, and 1,300 people were injured, most of them children and women as well. In 2014, Gaza witnessed its longest period of war when it was subjected to 51 days of continuous shelling and destruction of homes. Civilians were not spared, and Israel killed more than 2,322 people, of whom 578 were children, 489 were women, and more than 100 were elderly people. In addition, 12,000 housing units were completely destroyed, and more than 160,000 units were partially destroyed, of which 6,600 are uninhabitable. This resulted in the displacement of nearly half a million citizens, who then sought refuge in United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) schools and other places that were not prepared to accommodate the displaced. It is worth noting that the majority of the displaced were women, girls, and children who had to reside in premises not designed for this purpose, and which therefore could not take into account any gender-specific needs. As for the last war on Gaza in May 2021, the occupation practiced myriad forms of killing and abuse against civilians, women, and children. Two hundred and thirty Palestinians were martyred, including 65 children, 39 women, and 17 elderly people. In addition to that, 1,710 people were injured, most of them children and women, and dozens of houses were destroyed while their occupants were inside, without prior notice. The infrastructure was destroyed, and thousands of citizens were displaced and in need of safe refuge, to no avail as schools had stopped admitting the displaced when officials declined to order them to operate as shelters. Many people's houses were also shelled, as was the case of the Abu Hatab family, among others, who were forced to seek shelter in the Al-Shati refugee camp.⁸

Turning to women's participation in post-conflict reconstruction, female activists agree that it is difficult to address the generally low level of female participation in Palestinian reconstruction without first addressing the multiple obstacles and barriers impeding their involvement. This persistent problem is primarily due to the patriarchal beliefs held by governmental decision-makers and political parties. There is a stereotype regarding women's role in society, which carries over during times of conflict and war: the occupation destroys homes, men build or rebuild homes, and women clean and beautify homes. As an additional component, the Legislative Council has no real role, even though it is supposed to be enacting legislation that institutionalizes and legalizes the reconstruction process, even as the Israeli occupation continues its aggressions and inflicts devastation across the territory.⁹ If the Legislative Council were active, it could pass legislation regulating the reconstruction process from a legal point of view, and might also be able to guarantee the application of the official guidelines for equality and non-discrimination set forth by the PA in its Declaration of Independence and Basic Law, especially Article IX thereof, which stipulates that all Palestinians are equal, without discrimination based on sex, color, or religion.¹⁰ All Palestinian female respondents in this study agree that Resolution 1325 is extremely important for Palestinian women and that it has a particular

6 Luna Erekat, Status of Palestinian Women Political Participation, MIFTAH, p. 5

7 - 1325 "هداية شمعون: "قرار مجلس الأمن 1325" (Hidaya Chamoun: "Security Council Resolution 1325"), p. 2

8 Various reports issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip, 2008-2012-2014-2021

9 Taghreed Jumaa, Director of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, Gaza, interviewed by the authors.

10 Palestinian Basic Law, Article 9

significance for Palestinian women, who suffer not only from the Israeli occupation and its brutal practices, but also from instability within Palestinian society.

Aligning Palestinian Policies with Resolution 1325

Palestinian women believe that the PA's signing of and commitment to Resolution 1325 was a formality. The PA treats the Resolution, which was signed by the State of Palestine in 2014, like it treats all other international resolutions: they are documents to be signed, with no efforts made to harmonize the existing structure of domestic laws with the new obligations placed upon the PA as a result of newly signed these agreements, such as Resolution 1325.¹¹ Although there is a national plan to implement the resolution – which currently only exists as provisions – the extent of the PA's commitment to its implementation is unclear. In addition, public policies and executive procedures did not address the requirements of the four prongs of the resolution, which were also not localized into Palestinian law.

Palestinian society, and particularly its women, face a unique set of challenges: the ongoing war in Gaza and its effects, including killing of people, destruction of homes (often with their occupants inside), and the instability it creates economically, socially, politically, and legally. All of these issues particularly affect women's rights. In addition, the country has faced challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Official authorities failed to involve women in the pandemic response; women were not included in emergency committees nor in government actions to manage the Covid-19 crisis. Palestinian women continue to suffer from Israeli violations in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem, as well as against the diaspora, in addition to the suffering of female political prisoners in Israeli prisons, who are subjected to continuous violations by the occupation without being able to hold it accountable.¹²

The PA tasked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with preparing reports that should have been issued by the competent authority in this field: the Ministry of Women's Affairs. This was even more problematic as the reports submitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs failed to involve Palestinian civil society organizations, such as the General Union of Palestinian Women, further demonstrating the significant gap between civil society, especially women's NGOs, and the PA. The Palestinian government's commitment to Resolution 1325 was only reflected after the Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad issued a decree creating the Higher National Committee for the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325, chaired by the female Minister of Women's Affairs. The Committee's members included a people from various ministries and active women's organizations, and in short order it embarked on preparing the strategic framework required for implementation of the resolution and preparing the second iteration of the national plan. However, the government's commitment to this implementation fell short in one area. UN Security Council resolutions are merely guidelines for governments; as governments attempt to implement such resolutions locally, there are frequent gaps between the stated plan and the actual, selective implementation. In Palestine, this selective implementation was exacerbated by the government's failure to allocate a special budget for implementation, leading to a reliance on external funding.¹³

The government has further failed to implement and prioritize Resolution 1325, as demonstrated by Palestine's 2017-2022 National Policy Agenda, in which the only mention of the resolution is a brief reference to the resolution's third pillar of sustainable development; under the item related to social justice and the rule of law there is a reference to promoting gender equality and empowering women. The National Policy Agenda expired in 2022, and the National Authority must take Resolution 1325 into consideration and make it an essential part of the policies included in the policy agenda, especially with regard to participation, protection, and accountability. As the representative of the Palestinian people, the National Authority also holds the most significant role in holding the Israeli occupation accountable. However, without the necessary tools or the support of many friendly states, it has no ability to pressure the occupation. Civil society has taken on a greater role in pressing

11 Fatima Ashour, Human Rights Defender and Feminist Activist, interviewed by the authors.

12 Mariam Zaqout, Director of the Culture & Free Thought Association, interviewed by the authors.

13 Nazzal, interview.

for the occupation's accountability indirectly via monitoring, documenting, and exposing the violations it commits to the rest of the world.¹⁴

While the general policies and executive procedures in force in the Palestinian territories have not responded to the requirements necessary for the implementation of the resolution, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, led by Minister Dr. Amal Hamad, is actively pursuing its implementation. The Ministry is hampered in its efforts, as the executive authority depends greatly on civil and women's organizations and has abdicated all responsibility for supporting the resolution, including failure to issue policies that would enable implementation. In addition, many ministries have not yet included the four pillars of the resolution in their official priorities. However, there has been progress towards the implementation of Resolution 1325 through the development of the second iteration of the National Plan for Resolution 1325, which is a comprehensive plan still in development.¹⁵

The political division in Palestine has negatively affected the establishment of coalitions and unions capable of pushing the authorities to adopt more dynamic visions towards developing the legislative, legal, and economic structure in the Palestinian situation.¹⁶ There are two coalitions working towards the implementation of Resolution 1325, each with its own vision and methods; :

1. The "Civil Coalition," which includes at least 18 women's organizations, and which has its own secretariat consisting of five civil organizations: The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), the Women's Affairs team, the Legal Advice Center, the Palestinian Developmental Women Studies Association, and the Culture & Free Thought Association. This secretariat is led by MIFTAH and the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees.
2. A coalition formed under the leadership of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the West Bank under the name of the "National Coalition"; it includes several other coalitions, including the Civil Coalition.¹⁷

These two coalitions have each created their own plans: the one from the Civil Coalition to implement Resolution 1325 within Palestine, and the second is a national plan set by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. There was an attempt to merge the two plans into one, but these efforts were unsuccessful. It is worth noting that the national plan was largely based on many of the pillars of the Civil Coalition plan, which was developed earlier.

Obstacles to the Localization of Resolution 1325 in Palestine

Palestinian women agree on a number of obstacles that stand in the way of localizing Resolution 1325, as follows:

- The lack of political will among Palestinian policymakers, who, when examining the resolution, focus on the violations and practices of the occupying power, without discussing the highly sensitive domestic issues such as gender equality and violence against women, which are not on the PA's list of priorities.
- The focus of the decision-making elite on "awareness" at the expense of real-world implementation through on-the-ground activism, wherein all decision-making circles would engage in localizing the resolution. Many feminists believe that the state of "elitism" in dealing with decision-making, without mass action, contributes significantly to hindering its localization.
- The lack of clarity regarding the meaning of "localization." Decision-makers believe that localization has already occurred,

¹⁴ Ashour, interview.

¹⁵ Siniora, interview

¹⁶ Shadia Al Ghoul, MIFTAH Foundation Program Coordinator, Gaza, interviewed by the authors.

¹⁷ We are referring here to the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the West Bank, as there is another ministry in the Gaza Strip run by the de facto government.

especially since each country has its own understanding and interpretation of the meaning and implementation of Resolution 1325, in line with its national situation. The PA's approximation of the significance of the resolution, in line with its authoritarian perspective, garnered satisfaction and acceptance among women in Palestine. Here, it is necessary to emphasize the need to integrate the resolution into the official national and social liberation discourse along with other international resolutions, which constitute one of the pillars of the Palestinian political vision.

- The Palestinian political division that has hindered the unification of Palestinian laws and impeded the implementation of laws in Palestine, especially in light of the disruption and dissolution of the Legislative Council.

Obstacles to the Implementation of Resolution 1325

There are four main categories of obstacles that have impeded the implementation of Resolution 1325's four pillars:

1. Political obstacles: The perpetuation of political division, the absence of democratic and legislative practices in Palestine, and the encroachment of the executive authority, whether in the West Bank or Gaza Strip, have impeded the localization of resolutions in laws and have resulted in the lack of effective oversight and accountability mechanisms official bodies
2. Legal obstacles: The National Authority's weak understanding of external laws and legislation promoting women, and the lack of harmonization between Palestinian laws with internationally signed agreements, have resulted in a gap between domestic laws and international conventions. Without harmonization, it will not be possible to localize the resolution.
3. Cultural obstacles: The absence of strategic policies that would support the dissemination of democratic culture, and curb clan culture, by changing school curricula and filtering out any discrimination towards women and other minority groups demonstrates a lack of will to change Palestinian cultural norms. In addition, no media policies have been developed to encourage dialogue, freedom for nonconformity, and there has been no call to change discriminatory laws, especially those related to women, in favor of laws based on the principle of equality and justice in and before the law.
4. Financial obstacles: Without sufficient funding, institutions lack the resources necessary to lobby policy-makers to implement the resolution, educate society about its importance, and launch advocacy campaigns and other long-term initiatives pushing for implementation.

It should be noted that the prevailing cultural thought in Palestinian society is against granting women equal rights, due to widespread gender discrimination. This attitude is further entrenched due to the PA's silent or neutral attitude towards the continuous deterioration in culture and values, not only with regards to women but also to minorities in general, which puts intellectual and social pluralism in real danger. This issue has reached a point where it is threatening the lives of women and anyone else who is different, while also undermining the sovereignty of the PA and preventing it from fulfilling its obligations resulting from its accession to conventions and agencies as a form of sovereignty.

In addition, there are a number of other unique obstacles that don't fall as easily into one of the three above categories, namely:

- The poor organization of the Supreme National Committee, its inability to hold regular meetings, and the resulting impact on the effectiveness of Resolution 1325's implementation plan.
- The absence of a unified national methodology and vision for monitoring and documenting violations against women and girls.
- The poor quality of the published studies and papers highlighted in the strategic objectives of the national plan for the

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resolution's implementation.

- The lack of coordination between partners with regards to the implementation, as well as the absence of a participatory approach, alongside the prevalence of individual initiatives led by partner institutions, which are all to the detriment of the plan's implementation.
- The lack of financial resources necessary for the establishment of the national watch group and the activation of its role to monitor and document violations against women and girls in Palestine.
- Inadequate funding from donor countries, which had recently been more focused on financing the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, then followed by focusing on the Russian-Ukrainian war and the new refugee crisis.
- The limited international clout of the PA, which cannot force the passing of UN resolutions against the Israeli occupation and the unending violations it commits against all Palestinians, especially women and girls.

Women's Perspectives on Resolution 1325 in Palestine

1. Perspectives on the Implementation of the Political Participation Pillar

The women we talked to agree that there has not been any significant progress so far when it comes to Palestinian women's political participation. The elections of local bodies held in the West Bank were proof of this, as the percentage of women candidates in the second phase was less than 2%, despite women being on eight electoral lists. The local elections clearly showed that the Palestinian law hinders the active participation of women, as the electoral law for local bodies guarantees participation but not victory, which was shown by the results of those elections. In fact, women constituted only 20% of the successful candidates. In addition, Palestinian parties and factions have not shown any efforts to increase the percentage of women included in their candidate lists, limiting themselves to the 25% women candidate quota imposed by law. It is important to note that this percentage does not mean that these women were included in the party lists, in positions guaranteed to succeed. Political factions only respect the quota as a legal formality, to avoid being rejected by the people; the quota also in no way helps women achieve influential or decision-making positions within these parties, where they might be able to help support the inclusion of more women.¹⁸

Political participation in the various governmental departments is also uneven: structures related to security and peace, such as the justice system, police and security agencies, and in reconciliation talks, have different levels of female participation from other legislative structures such as the governance, trade unions, and grass-roots organizations, which have comparatively lower rates of women's participation. This is due to the lack of political will to implement the decisions of the National and Central Councils to allocate 30% of seats to women in all structures and departments of state institutions. This issue reflects the ongoing stereotypical view that women should limit their work to the private sphere. This prejudice and lack of inclusion has also affected women's participation in committees responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁹

Women's political participation in Palestine is concentrated within a small number of feminist circles, and the number of female leaders is insufficient to participate more broadly in politics. The policies adopted by Palestinian parties exclude women from influential positions within their structures; they opt instead to portray women as societal role models that can affect public interest.²⁰ The Palestinian women's political participation crisis is also affected by the absence of democratic experience in the country, and the perpetuation of non-democracy via political divisions. All of this has led to political stagnation for Palestinian women, their inability to increase their own participation in Palestinian institutions, and leaves many Palestinian women with unfulfilled aspirations for greater political inclusion and activism.²¹

While women have been able to advance their positions in many fields, one area of limited success is their participation in reconciliation committees and talks. Women participated in sit-ins and marches and were beaten, yet their attempts failed to effect real change. Male decision-makers engaged in authoritarian violence and rejected the idea of reconciliation for various reasons, including the lack of political will for achieving this objective, and pressure from parties that benefit from divisions, who then suppressed calls for reconciliation as threatening to their interests. It should be noted that women's participation in reconciliation talks has not met the required level throughout the years of division.²²

It should be noted that the composition of reconstruction committees in Palestine is based on partisan quotas, without

¹⁸ Al Ghoul, interview.

¹⁹ Nazzal, interview

²⁰ Sahar Yaghi, feminist activist, interviewed by the authors.

²¹ Siniora, interview

²² Zaqout, interview

considering the feminist perspective which calls for equal gender participation (and this disparity has been repeatedly shown in every committee formed after each aggression, whether in Gaza or in the West Bank).²³ In fact, it is unsurprising that women are marginalized in reconstruction planning, given their marginalization in the broader cultural context; however, their limited participation in reconstruction committees is especially notable as women are the main victims of crises and conflicts. The ramifications of this exclusion were made clear during reconstruction planning after the 2004 aggression, which had problems related to the quality of housing and temporary accommodation.²⁴

Women's participation in reconstruction efforts must be supported, as recommended in Resolution 1325's special provision on reconstruction from a female perspective. Reconstruction goes beyond the concept of the physical reconstruction of homes, buildings, and roads, to encompass broader concepts within this process, specifically psychological, social, emotional, and humanitarian reconstruction. Our respondents explained that unending war not only destroys buildings and roads, but also dreams, wishes, and memories. Women explained that they are the best suited for this intangible reconstruction, as the stereotypically domestic roles placed upon them also make them the keepers of the memories from their destroyed homes. Women know every nook and cranny in the house, and how their homes can best serve their families; thus, they should active participants in reconstruction, if not fully in charge.²⁵

Previous studies in this area have shown a set of challenges that have been, and still are, significant obstacles to improving the level of women's political participation.²⁶ These obstacles primarily derive from the prevailing patriarchal culture, the misinterpretation of religious texts (often serving the interests of the source of the interpretation), near constant security concerns, and the ever-present possibility of Israeli aggression. In addition to these challenges, we can also include family responsibilities and the reproductive roles widely attributed to women, and the fact that a woman's desire to be more active outside the home clashes against an unsupportive society that prefers the status quo. The aforementioned study identified an additional major hurdle: voters of both sexes have little confidence in women's political abilities. This belief reduces women's chances of being elected, under the pretext of "lack of experience," and perpetuates the idea that these positions are for men and not women.

On the other hand, many young feminist activists who are active in a variety of societal and political fields – including community work, student action, and political party work – believe that there are multiple opportunities for women and girls who want to increase their participation. However, these activists also believe that part of the responsibility lies with women, as many of the existing limitations on female participation have been placed by women themselves. Many women prioritize their reproductive and caretaking roles, especially those roles that would take them out of the home. While these priorities were imposed by the patriarchal society, we cannot forget that women have perpetuated and participated in the continuation of these stereotypes, which have evolved over time into constraints. Therefore, young feminists consider it vital that they rebel against these roles in order to change them and redistribute them in a way that ensures gender equality. However, these activists also recognize that while women have played a part in bolstering these self-imposed barriers – which prevent them from progressing towards more equal participation and competing with men in a patriarchal society – this does not negate the societal, legal, and political restrictions that have been, and continue to be, imposed by men.²⁷

Despite the PA's commitments to Resolution 1325 and to the alignment of national laws with UN conventions and resolutions, through the establishment of the National Committee for the Harmonization of National Laws and Legislations,²⁸ feminists believe that there are many reasons behind the weak political participation of women at all levels:²⁹

1. **Cultural and Social Context:** Women believe that Palestinian society still deals with women's issues from a patriarchal perspective that encourages the marginalization of women, due to stereotypical roles attributed to women. This often

23 The Israeli invasion of the Muqata'a and the city of Jenin, known at the time as "Operation Defensive Shield".

24 Jumaa, interview

25 Zainab Al-Ghunaimi, lawyer, interviewed by the authors..

26 Ola Abu Al-Ghaib, Iyad Al-Krunz, 1325 قرار في ظل واقع المشاركة السياسية للمرأة في ظل قرار 1325 (The reality of women's political participation in light of Resolution 1325), the Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC), March 2015

27 Different opinions of young female leaders during a focus group held in May 2022.

28 The Committee for the harmonization of legislation has 14 members, representing official institutions in addition to the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), the General Union of Palestinian Women, and the Bar Association. The Public Prosecution also participates in its meetings on amending the Penal Code.

29 Different opinions taken from interviews with feminists and activists in Palestinian society

leads to the perception that women and girls' capacities and skills are inferior, thereby limiting opportunities for change for women, and increasing gender-based violence. This, in turn, creates a large gap in unlocking women's potential and their creative abilities in work and engagement, and restricts their roles in post-conflict events. The result is low political participation and absence from decision-making positions.

2. **Political Context:** A partisan patriarchy dominates the Palestinian society, hence the prevalence of men's control over decision-making in political parties. This has reinforced the deliberate and systematic marginalization of women, in addition to the fact that the political divisions and tensions between parties after the wars contributed to the creation of the "quota policies," which were based in partisan benefits instead of equal participation for women. Thus, women's participation was again ignored, and they were absent, or even marginalized, across the board.
3. **Legal Context:** There are many issues in the legal field that have fueled the exclusion of women, such as: the disruption of the Legislative Council and the subsequent absence of its role in approving laws and legislation for more than 14 years; the lack of separation of powers; the monopoly of power exercised by the executive authority; and the absence of the Legislative Council's role in holding accountable other government authorities and agencies. It's also worth mentioning the weakness of legal NGOs in monitoring the state's obligations towards international and UN resolutions and holding the state accountable for its failures in these areas. These factors have clearly contributed to the state's inability to institutionalize and codify laws and policies that would guarantee women's rights to political participation, covered by the "explanation" that the Legislative Council has been unable to convene.
4. **Economic Context:** Many economic factors have contributed to widening the gaps in women's political participation, including: the extreme poverty of women; the increase in economic burdens on women, especially after conflicts and wars when women frequently must assume breadwinning responsibilities in the absence or death of men in their households; and the multiplicity of basic roles that women must balance after conflicts. All of these contribute to women prioritizing their reproductive and domestically productive roles over political engagement, that they can better meet the basic needs of the family.

2. Perspectives on the Implementation of the Accountability Pillar

There are two primary actors for whom women consider accountability important. First, they want domestic accountability for the violence against women that results from Palestinian culture, policies, and procedures. The primary oversight body has ceased to function since the dissolution of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the encroachment of the executive authority over possible competitors for power; these issues make domestic accountability difficult. Second is the Israeli occupation, which is an obvious target for Resolution 1325, which was written as a tool to counter occupying powers and their practices. However, so far we cannot say that there has been any development towards either accountability prong. Palestine has not taken any concrete actions to hold the occupation accountable for its crimes, instead limiting itself to addressing this issue in the Human Rights Council and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. This action does not rise to the level of accountability; it is limited in effect, and does not extend to include accountability at the local level, such as accountability for the violence against women and female journalists participating in events that were launched to denounce the killing of opposition figure Nizar Banat, or in women's protests to oppose division and call for its end.³⁰

In Palestine, accountability has been limited to monitoring violations and publishing periodic reports; no formal request for Israeli accountability from either civil organizations or the National Authority has been submitted to the UN General Assembly, calling on them to take action against the occupation's practices against women. Given the current absence of a more formal or rigorous accountability practice, significant changes will need to be made. Women need training in the field of accountability. There must be coordination and networking between civil society and the Palestinian Foreign Ministry in order to spread awareness about accountability mechanisms, UN tools, and committee mandates. Citizens need to know what channels are available to them in the pursuit of accountability, whether acting without institutional support or acting concert with the PA as

³⁰ Nazzal, interview

an official body. To date, the official institutions have fallen short in this effort.³¹

Civil society organizations and women's organizations have also failed in their role of promoting accountability for the occupation's violations, as this requires coordination with government entities and international agencies in order to document Israeli violations against women. This coordination would require the development of professional files and reports needed by international courts and international human rights bodies to hold the occupation accountable under Resolution 1325. To achieve this, feminist organizations and activists would need to build their capacities in terms of documentation and professional report writing. Turning to internal accountability for violations by the PA and other government, feminist organizations and activists have made some breakthroughs, as they have worked over recent years to adopt and implement complementary programs through unions and coalitions that promote a culture of accountability among decision-makers for violations of women's political and social rights. Although there has been some success achieved in this regard, the lack of coordination between legal and feminist institutions, the difference in on-the-ground directions for action, and their competitiveness have reduced the effectiveness of institutions in activating the principle of accountability.³²

In one positive development, women and feminist organizations have succeeded in implementing the principles of legal and societal accountability for decision-makers for violations and discrimination against women's rights to political and community participation by adopting many accountability tools, which have become popular and accepted by Palestinian decision-makers. These tools have also become accepted as a means of assessing the views of male decision-makers on various issues.

However, the principle of holding the occupation accountable for its violations against women and girls in accordance with Resolution 1325 still requires the coordinated efforts of governmental and non-governmental actors. The Bar Association could play a pivotal role in adopting accountability policies in accordance with international conventions and treaties through its the specialized committees which work to monitor these violations.³³ On the other hand, the resolution does not address the conflict with the occupation, and therefore what applies to the resolutions of international legitimacy with regards to Palestinian national rights does not fully apply in this case. Therefore, this approach will not be effective at the international level to pressure Israel into complying with the resolution and its provisions. The concept of accountability is still limited to the occupation's crimes generally against the Palestinian people, but incorporating the principle of Resolution 1325's gender perspective accountability requires women to work on two parallel fronts: first, holding the occupation – as the legally responsible party for the occupied areas – accountable for its violations against women and girls during war, which requires women and female journalists to shed light on these violations; and second, using the media tool to document violations, thus publicly holding the occupation accountable in a globally visible way. Female journalists and civilian women can help shape public opinion here, generating international support for the occupation's accountability by publishing of images and accounts of their experiences.³⁴

With respect to local or community accountability, female journalists must seek to spread the culture and practice of accountability by shedding light on the violations against women and preparing investigative reports from a female point of view. The unique vantage point of women journalists would give their gathered data and evidence on gendered violations a female perspective, which could serve as a foundation for decision makers as they pursue accountability for violations.³⁵

According to a position paper on Resolution 1325 by the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, the application of the resolution to the actions of the Israeli occupation is based in its military, uprooting nature and its ongoing aggressive and violent actions. The violent and disruptive impact of the occupation cannot be emphasized enough, and has had multiple society-dissolving repercussions: forced displacement and more than half of the Palestinian people in refugee camps and as diaspora; the perpetuation of land confiscation and settlement construction in all occupied Palestinian territories, especially Jerusalem; the ongoing annexation, demolition of homes, and seizure of lands; and the continued killings, arrests, sieges, and military checkpoints aimed at restricting citizens' movement and driving them towards internal and external migration. All of this has led to the current situation in the Gaza Strip where about 2 million Palestinians live under catastrophic humanitarian conditions due to Israeli occupation policies, particularly the suffocating blockade and the repeated, aggressive military attacks on the Gaza Strip. This is a severe humanitarian crisis for all residents of the Strip and violates most of their human rights as

31 Al Ghoul, interview

32 Feryal Thabet, feminist activist and director of the Women's Health Center, Bureij refugee camp, interviewed by the authors.

33 Sarah Kilani, Human Rights Activist, Palestine Bar Association, interviewed by the authors.

34 Dr. Mariam Abu Daqqa, Political Activist, interviewed by the authors.

35 Laila Al Mudallal, feminist activist and journalist at the South Women Media Forum, interviewed by the authors.

they live in a collective prison, their movements in and out of the Strip severely restricted. The region itself has become an unliveable humanitarian disaster, according to an UNRWA report in 2020.

In addition, further occupation policies and measures have been imposed, thus impeding our people's aspirations to get rid of the occupation and establish an independent, sovereign state of Palestine. These policies are a flagrant violation of international conventions, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, human rights laws, and the principles of the United Nations. This indicates that there is a need to redefine the conflict based on the definitions of armed conflict as stated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its 12 critical areas of concern, namely the area regarding women and armed conflict, which reaffirms the commitment of states to the objectives of Resolution 1325.

As one interviewee noted, it is important to review Resolution 1325 comprehensively, taking into account that it includes all Palestinian women: refugees, displaced persons, and those living in Palestine under occupation. This will help us set priorities for action plans and benefit from the mechanisms of the Resolution in Palestine.³⁶

Accountability should be applied not only to the occupation by exposing its crimes against women, but to the PA and the de facto government in the Gaza Strip for measures taken, or not taken, in the implementation of international conventions to which the State of Palestine has acceded; one important step would include reviewing the laws and decisions that can be issued to protect women – such as the Family Protection Law which was designed to protect women from domestic violence – and calling attention to existing discriminatory legislation against women. Given the current political division and the absence of the Legislative Council, it's nearly impossible for women to hold the PA accountable as required. The WPS agenda must be advanced in order to achieve civil peace and end political division; it is imperative to push for holding Palestinian elections as soon as possible, and stand against the Israeli occupation should elections be prevented in Jerusalem. Randa Siniora advocates for solutions to be identified to facilitate holding the elections, by force if necessitated through direct clashes with the occupation. Without elections, and with the continued political division, it will be impossible to create accountability processes. As such, it is essential to foster an independent judiciary and have an active, democratically elected Legislative Council.³⁷

3. Perspectives on the Implementation of the Protection Pillar

Women have a diverse understanding of “protection,” influenced in part by the different forms of violence that they can experience. Some women believe that protection means providing safety and freedom, while others believe that enjoying privacy and not having others trespass on your private property is considered protection. Another common perception is of protection as not being subjected to violence, having someone to prevent violence and hold the attempted perpetrator accountable. Many of our participants who live in Gaza believe that protection means living in peace, not war, and protecting their children from death, fear, and panic, as well as holding the Israeli occupation accountable and preventing oppression. Thus, the concept of protection varies according to the situation and the speaker, as evidenced from our respondents' stories and personal experiences of protection and its requirements.

Some people believe that women are at their most vulnerable during conflicts and wars because women generally are especially vulnerable in dangerous situations. This view tends to be shared by men and women, but each has slightly different interpretations of “vulnerability.” The patriarchal perspective stems from the idea that women need protection, and cannot protect themselves without men. Therefore, men often presume women's needs on their behalf of women, including what men presume need in terms of protection. This leads to an incomplete concept of protection from male point of view. Instead, women often demonstrate a high capability and skill in the face of difficulties despite the situations of intense fear they experience, such as fear of death and injury, fear for their children, fear for their husbands and men, and fear for their hopes and dreams, as in the destruction of their homes with all their good memories. All these fears, which one would expect

36 Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling, position paper on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, published on the Centre's website on 29 October 2020.

37 Siniora, interview

to women more vulnerable during war, give them high flexibility and resilience stemming from the new roles they play, in addition to their basic roles and burdens.³⁸

After multiple experiences of war and Israeli aggression, Palestinian women (and specifically those in the Gaza Strip) believe that war has increased their strength and resilience a necessity for survival, instead of increasing their vulnerability. This resilience is clearly evidenced by the tasks and responsibilities entrusted to them in protecting and supporting their families in times of war. Not only do women in conflict situations around the world display great courage and strength, but also use their skills and ability to face hardships head-on. Women demonstrate this by performing their daily duties as heads of household, breadwinners, and caregivers in their family, as well as by actively participating in their local communities.³⁹ Following the successive wars on the Gaza Strip, women have also gained the ability to adapt and deal with the war and its aftermath in different ways. This has often helped them play additional roles, different from their peacetime roles, even though women and girls face discrimination and violence from their patriarchal society during peace.

The women who shared their experiences believe that during the various wars on the Gaza Strip, they were exposed to compound violence: they have endure the violence from the occupation, displacement, and fear of death to the point that they now suffer from daily anxiety and fear from loud sounds. In addition, they endure significant gender-based violence inflicted on them by men as a result of economic deprivation, physical hardships, and confined and limited spaces, especially in the homes that welcomed large numbers of displaced men and women.

From the perspective of women, the vulnerability of women and girls in times of conflict is due to their relative weakness created by first the patriarchal society – which creates the social, economic, political, and cultural positions that believe women to be weak – and worsened by factors related to conflict. According to our interviewees, women in and of themselves are not more vulnerable than men in times of war and armed conflict; it is only from specific situations and factors that certain groups of women are made to be particularly vulnerable to harm or in need of extra protection. In each situation, it is important to carry out an in-depth assessment of protection needs to identify the most vulnerable groups, while considering what protection would be possible.⁴⁰ Women perceive their own protection needs differently from men. Therefore, women must work on standardizing and disseminating concepts in order to embed them in policies and laws seeking to provide protection for women and girls, both for normal circumstances and in emergencies such as wars and Israeli invasions.⁴¹

While the occupation affects all Palestinians, regardless of their location or gender, its repressive policies affect women more than men in many ways. Compare this disparity in the violence practiced by the occupation to the violence done to women resulting from the patriarchal authority and policies. The perpetuation of stereotypes about women's roles contributes to increased gender-based violence as well as increased violence from occupation; such patriarchal stereotyping contributes directly to the low level of women's participation in the public space, their limited ability to influence public life, and creates additional duties for women managing their private lives, especially in agricultural areas where women bear the burden of unpaid work.

Our respondents emphasized that the Zionist occupation policies – and their impacts on women and violence against women – increased the need for protection in several areas of the West Bank, including:

1. The Old City of Hebron: This area is controlled by some Israeli settlers. Palestinian lives are disrupted and they are exposed to compound violence. Violence against women is higher since they are frequently at home and often face crimes committed by the settlers, including the following forms of gender-based violence:
 - Limitation of movement
 - Women work as home guards when men are away in public spaces, so as to protect their children and homes from the practices of settlers, which exposes them to increasing and continuous violence
 - Threat of death to women and children

38 Jomaa, interview

39 Report on the needs of women in the Gaza Strip following the war, Women's Affairs Center, 2021

40 Multiple opinions of women who were subject to compound violence during the war on the Gaza Strip, "multiple interviews"

41 Mariam Shaqoura, Director of the Women's Health Center, Jabalia, interviewed by the authors.

- Continuous vandalism of property and private possessions
 - Difficulty in maintaining some form of social life, which impacts multiple aspects of life such as marriage and the high rate of spinsterhood; young men prefer not to marry women from the Old City due to the difficulty of movement, thus creating a new form of violence against girls
 - Depriving children and girls of education, partly due to the difficulty of movement, and specifically for girls from fear of settlers and settler violence
2. The Jordan Valley: As a fertile agricultural area, this is one of the areas most threatened by the occupation. Women suffer heavy forms violence in order to protect their lands, since women mostly work as unpaid farmers in these places, as well as additional burdens such as fetching and hauling water over long distances. In addition, the continuous restrictions imposed by the occupation affect the right to education and the right to health. Studies show that women and children in those areas suffer from anaemia, primarily due to the occupation's restrictive practices.

As shown from these examples, the occupation's practices lead to more violence against women and girls in the West Bank, with the perpetuation of the expansion policies through the seizure of lands, destruction of homes, construction of roads at the expense of agricultural lands, road closures between Palestinian cities, and the fragmentation of the West Bank. All of these practices increase violence against Palestinians in general, and against women in particular, who they are more likely to stay in homes and agricultural lands. Their locations expose them to more forms of violence, such as depriving them of movement, and sometimes educational opportunities for girls, as well as threatening women's lives, as the ones working in agricultural lands. Women are the first line of defence against settlers since men work outside the city. In light of the on-going demolition policy, women bear the brunt of violence as they lose their privacy and their right to housing; this was especially so during the Covid-19 pandemic.⁴²

Women in occupied Palestine, Jerusalem, and diaspora suffer from occupation. These practices are reflected according to the region and the policy in force. The ban on the return of women in the diaspora, the deprivation of movement, the demolition of homes in Jerusalem, the discriminatory policy in occupied Palestine, and the systematic feminicide in the West Bank are all practices exacted on women in the Gaza Strip, not to mention the continuous blockade for more than 22 years, from 2000 through today.⁴³

The occupation has affected all aspects of life. Of course, there are the killings, displacements, and the destruction of homes even with residents still inside. But the Israeli occupation has also classified six Palestinian NGOs as terrorist organizations, affecting women's and human rights organizations that advocate for the rights of women and Palestinians in the face of the brutal occupation. Palestinian women are set apart because they incur the violence of occupation, a special case of its own as the last colonial occupation.⁴⁴

Women in Gaza also suffer as a result of the divisions resulting from the two governments, which leads to two different discourses women's rights. However, both governments share patriarchal views and practices that limit women's participation and reinforce the stereotypes regarding social roles. In addition, as the political division affects all political, social, economic, and legal aspects of life, women – who have endured the brunt of the problem as the poorest, most marginalized, and most exposed group – continue to be most in need of protection. Again, as the occupation is the main cause of the exacerbated suffering of women, it is also the reason for the increase in violence. The occupation has contributed to the poor economic, social, and political conditions, thereby directly leading to violence from all actors as a reflection of these practices.⁴⁵

Jerusalemite women also suffer from compound violence and discrimination, but as their situation is distinct from those in Gaza and the West Bank, they are in need of a different perspective on protection. The violence women experience in

42 An intervention by Randa Siniara during a dialogue on the reality of Palestinian women in light of the Israeli occupation violations, The Culture & Free Thought Association, 9 December 2021

43 Amal Syam, Director of the Women's Affairs Centre – the Gaza Strip, interviewed by the authors.

44 Syam, interview.

45 An intervention by Mrs. Amal Syam during a dialogue on the reality of Palestinian women in light of the Israeli Occupation violations, The Culture and Free Thought Association, 9 December 2021

Jerusalem is more concentrated in societal violence. For example, Jerusalemite women face compound violence in marriage. A Jerusalemite experience significant hardships if they marry someone from outside of Jerusalem. A Jerusalemite woman married to a man from the West Bank, for example, would not be able to live with her husband in Jerusalem, nor would she be allowed to register her children, thus depriving them and herself from their rights. Furthermore, freedom of residence and movement are also affected. Palestinian families often try to look for any means that enhance their ability to remain in Jerusalem. However, the measures taken by the Israeli occupation seek to suppress all these attempts. When a Palestinian woman resides outside Jerusalem for any reason whatsoever, such as marriage or work, her family is always subject to searches and asked questions about their place of residence. If it is proven that she does not reside in Jerusalem, this leads to the revocation of her Jerusalem ID, thus preventing her from re-entering Jerusalem to go to her home and family. Paradoxically, these women cannot obtain a West Bank ID either, which exacerbates their problems and increases violence against them. Jerusalemite women suffer from the violence of the occupation in multiple forms, including such deprivation of family reunification, which increases the incidence of separated families who reside in different places, sometimes leading to a mother being separated from her children or even being deprived of housing.⁴⁶

On another hand, the occupation prohibits construction in Jerusalem and bars the issuance of construction permits, while simultaneously demolishing houses in on-going implementation of the ethnic cleansing policy. Women suffer from compound violence when their houses are destroyed. Living with relatives, and the subsequent lack of privacy and comfort, constitutes a major form of violence for women. In addition, many families refuse to live with relatives and choose instead to build tents to preserve their right to the land, thus exposing themselves to various forms of violence as there are no bathrooms, no privacy, and no safety: “One of the women whose house was demolished said that she had to wake her daughters up an hour before school so that they could use the school bathrooms before the other students came.”⁴⁷

There is another form of violence suffered by female students who live in Kafr Aqab, which is an area outside Jerusalem. As it is considered part of Jerusalem by the occupation, construction is allowed without permits under the policy of voluntary displacement of Jerusalemites. As such, families flee to Kafr Aqab to construct houses and have a place to live. Female students struggle however, with the lack of schools in the area, and they are not allowed to attend the schools in the West Bank. Therefore, these students are forced to go to Jerusalem, passing through the Israeli military checkpoint where they are subjected to all forms of violence, humiliation, and sexual harassment on a daily basis. It is necessary to ensure that Jerusalemite women and girls are protected from all these forms of violence by the occupation. However, such protection is not available as required since the PA and the international community cannot hold the occupation accountable, not to mention that the PA is incapable of enforcing laws in these areas.⁴⁸

Likewise, the patriarchy dominating all aspects of life in PA areas aggravates gender-based violence. Women’s rights advocates, who work to promote equality and prevent discrimination, are constantly threatened by extremist groups that reject the notion of gender equality. Many women’s rights advocates are exposed to societal threats as a result of their demands for protection for women from violence or implementation of the Family Protection Law. This recent crisis revealed the significant cultural impediments deeply rooted within Palestinian society, which reject any attempt to bring about real empowerment of women. Feminist activist Sama Awaida was directly targeted. Several attempts have been made over the years to end her advocacy for the rights of women and girls and for the Family Protection Law that the feminist movement in Palestine seeks to enact. The Islamic Liberation Party in the West Bank launched a fierce online campaign against her personally, under the pretext that she is advocating for homosexuality. The systematic targeting of Awaida is one of the many forms used by patriarchal authorities to combat feminism and women’s rights advocates. Such attacks target everything that does not conform to prescribed gender roles, with the purpose of hindering the advance of women’s rights.

Palestinian women and advocates must fight the occupation and its effects on women, girls, and nonconforming individuals, while also confronting their own society’s attacks on their rights and its constant prioritization of “political” interests over the rights and protection of women and girls. In one example, the PA signed the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women’s treaty, but was unable to publish it in the Official Gazette, prompting parties in Palestinian society to lead a campaign against the Committee. The PA then chose not to address the various actions taken against the treaty instead of

46 An intervention by Mrs. Sama Awaida during a dialogue on the reality of Palestinian women in light of the Israeli Occupation violations, The Culture and Free Thought Association, 9 December 2021

47 Awaida, *ibid.*

48 Awaida, *ibid.*

defending its decisions and taking responsibility for them, as well as defending its female advocates. This was also the case with the Family Protection Law, reviewed in the second version. Female activists and feminist advocates were targeted by smear campaigns and threats because of their efforts demanding the enactment of this law. Unfortunately, with the patriarchy still dominant in society and positions of power, no measures have been taken to put an end to the aforementioned violations or to protect women. Feminist organizations and female activists must continue to lobby and demand the protection of women advocates and the adoption of the Family Protection Law.⁴⁹

Women activists and advocates also need support at the official level by holding accountable the groups and people who threaten and defame them, as well as reassuring them that the government and society stands with them.⁵⁰ Palestinian feminists agree that there is persistent inaction from the government with regards to protecting Palestinian women from internal violence, as evidenced by the ongoing failure to adopt the Family Protection Law at a time when violence and threats against women are escalating in Palestinian society.

The priority of the Palestinian government is to uphold the national agenda at the expense of the social agenda; it highlights the occupation's violations against women while ignoring the internal violations, especially the cases of femicide which are disregarded in the national report. This approach is an attempt to prevent the occupation and the international community from condemning or criminalizing the PA or the resistance in the Gaza Strip.⁵¹ In general, there is a lack of protection for women in Palestine, whether in terms of internal violations or violations by the occupation; and women are still paying the price for the lack of such protection mechanisms.

4. Perspectives on the Implementation of the Relief and Recovery Pillar

The evident and systematic marginalisation of women in Palestine, and the absence of Palestinian women from groups in charge of reconstruction plans in the Gaza Strip, are major indicators of the lack of any form of recovery. Despite the fact that women are most affected by the recurrent and aggressive Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, they are, at the same time, benefiting the least from recovery and reconstruction processes.

There are two parties that are primarily responsible for recovery, particularly post-conflict recovery, with the support of a third party. The first party is the Israeli occupation as the occupying power; the second is the UNRWA as the agency responsible for Palestinian refugees; and the third is the PA. The people living in the Palestinian territories are 75% refugees. The UNRWA is the main party responsible for adopting recovery policies and measures and improving the lives of women, supported by its agencies and the PA. To this end, the UNRWA must pursue the goal for which it was established: considering the needs of citizens and ensuring their right to return. However, the lives of citizens have not been improved yet, nor have any services aimed at improving their situation have been provided so far. Only relief services are provided, and even these few services are being reduced due to lack of support. The UNRWA has prioritized the relief aspects of its mission over the other goals.

As always, the Israeli occupation is not exonerated from being the main cause of women's suffering, and the PA must also fulfil its role in such situations by drafting policies, regulations, and laws related to the post-conflict and reconstruction phase from a gender perspective that ensures the participation of women in all stages of reconstruction without gender-based discrimination.⁵²

⁴⁹ Zaqout, interview

⁵⁰ Yaghi, interview

⁵¹ Al Ghoul, interview

⁵² Al Ghoul, interview

5. Women's Involvement in Reconstruction

The role of Palestinian women in achieving civil peace is disrupted by to the political polarization between the Palestinian political forces. The effects and ramifications of this political division are not limited to politics, however, and impact all of society. However, the political parties lack a clear vision for their policy-makers, and they do not give women any opportunity to be involved in the reconstruction phase, whether in the Gaza Strip or in the West Bank, which is a clear violation of Resolution 1325. As for the participation of women in the reconstruction committees, their presence remains a formality and they have no actual influence or presence. It must be noted that the reconstruction plan called for by the Palestinian Council of Ministers had included five women; unfortunately, these women were not included in meetings and were effectively barred from any involvement in developing the plan.

Women's Proposals for Resolution 1325's Implementation

Our respondents believe that it is necessary to provide a set of requirements that would empower women along Resolution 1325's pillars:

1. Increasing Political Participation

Palestinian women believe that a legal guarantee is required to enhance women's effective political participation. They advocate for: amending existing legislation to allow for the effective and meaningful participation of women in decision-making; enacting the already-existing decisions establishing a quota of no less than 30% women in all official and non-official institutions, such as political parties; including women in political-party strategic plans and ensuring a prominent position for women in politics and in decision-making processes; and amending the bylaws of civil society organizations to adopt a women's quota of at least 30% up to parity or at a rate reflecting the ratio of women in the organization's base, starting with the structures affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization and moving on to professional unions and student councils. Women also find it necessary to address the international donor community and lobby for women's representation and involvement in reconstruction planning in all stages (planning, implementation, and oversight) as well as ensuring that the reconstruction process takes into account all women's needs.

- Female activists and feminists have set forth the following requirements for official entities:
- Guaranteed fair representation of women in their political entities, as this is an essential entry point for effective participation
- Amending articles in the electoral law that impede women from running for office, such as the condition that women must submit their resignation and have it accepted before running as a candidate
- Amending applicable regulations in the National Council so as to increase women's representation
- Training young women leaders to more effectively engage in the politics and assume greater responsibilities within civil society organisations and feminist organisations
- Preparing an ethical code of conduct signed by all Palestinian forces and factions to ensure the participation of women in decision-making positions, including that such participation is not merely a formality or limited to functionary roles in marches, sit-ins, and on-the-ground mobilization

2. Implementing Accountability

Our interviews all agreed that women are in dire need of training in the methods and practices of accountability, and that there is need for coordination between Palestinian civil society and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the goal of enabling women to use accountability mechanisms, especially those that make use of UN tools and its committees' specializations. An increase in women's understanding of accountability, including how to pursue it and implement it, is something we have been missing so far. Our women respondents also believe that it is necessary to formally address the international community, especially the International Court of Justice, to force the occupation to implement Resolution 1325 and to hold the occupation accountable for the crimes it has committed against the Palestinian people, in general, and women in particular.

3. Improving Protection

Palestinian feminists demand the enforcement of international law within the Palestinian territories, especially the Geneva Conventions for the protection of civilians and primarily women in times of conflict. Their responses in our interviews focused on two targets requiring protection mechanisms: the first is related to the occupation, while the second is related to Palestine at the local level. At the international level, feminists believe it necessary for Palestinian official institutions to lobby the international community to expose the occupation's practices, for a commitment in providing protection for civilians in the Palestinian territories, and to hold the occupation accountable for the violations it has committed against the Palestinian people, especially the violations against women and girls. At the local level, the suggested mechanism entails advocacy and lobbying the Palestinian decision-makers to publish reports, monitor violations against women in Palestinian society, and influence national policies and strategies to respond to protection requests, as well as addressing the international community on reconstruction to compel Israel to respect International Law, especially Resolution 1325, with regards to the protection of women from aggression.

4. Pursuing Relief and Recovery

The levels of recovery provided by the PA, the UNRWA, and NGOs – which take the form of emergency assistance to empower women to overcome the harsh realities of times of conflict – must take into account all the needs of women and lay the foundation for bringing about a qualitative change in the lives of women, as well as pave the way to integrate development and move beyond merely providing relief. This has yet to be achieved.

In addition, it is necessary to raise awareness on Resolution 1325 within society, train women in accountability skills related to the resolution, address the issue of advocating for women's rights in media institutions (both traditional media outlets and social media), and establish community awareness of Resolution 1325 to ensure the implementation of the recovery pillar by competent authorities.

Conclusion

Palestinian women live a severely complicated reality. They live in a mostly patriarchal society, bound by inherited and deeply rooted traditions that give men a higher value than women. This issue is further aggravated by an occupation embodied by Israel and reflected in practices, brutality, and hostility rooted in a settler, racist ideology that does not value the Palestinian human being as a whole. As such, the Palestinian woman suffers more hardships because she is the mother, sister, and wife of a Palestinian. She bears her share of the suffering from the occupation while also sharing in the suffering of Palestinian men under the practices of the occupation.

Palestinian division adds another layer of complexity. It created a disintegrated environment susceptible to the fragmentation of society. This is reflected in an unreasonable society incapable of maturely dealing with the critical presence of women and their necessary participation in creating a community environment that could enable advanced levels of community awareness and confront the discrimination and exclusion of Palestinian women.

Palestinian women still suffer from discrimination and exclusion. They are exposed to all forms of violations by the Israeli occupation, including killing, arrest, abuse, and repression. Despite the adoption of Resolution 1325, Palestinian women still face significant political, social, and economic impediments, and no solutions have been identified. Palestinian women believe that the solution lies in the serious work of civil organizations alongside the PA to encourage the PA to exhort the UN to provide women with protection and ensure accountability. Internally, there must be campaigns and practices lobbying for the protection of women from internal violence. The role of the Palestinian civil society should not be limited to raising awareness, but rather must include the search for more effective mechanisms to implement the resolution in Palestine.

Implementing Resolution 1325 requires continued efforts to build unified strategies that ensure increased pressure towards protecting women's rights on one hand and hold the occupation accountable on the other. In addition, coalitions and networks must be established and developed to promote joint action by organizing international pressure and advocacy campaigns that ensure the accountability of the occupation, investing in social media in order to make the voice of Palestinian women heard, exposing the occupation's violations to the world, and carrying out the substantial work necessary to implement Resolution 1325 at the national level and increase the participation of women in public life.

Appendix (1)

Interviewees:

1. Mariam Zaqout	Director of the Culture and Free Thought Association
2. Rima Nazzal	Political activist
3. Randa Siniora	Feminist activist
4. Suheir Faraj	Women Media and Development – TAM Foundation
5. Mariam Shaqoura	Community activist
6. Amal Syam	Director of the Women's Affairs Centre – the Gaza Strip
7. Hidaya Chamoun	Researcher and political and community activist - AMAN Foundation
8. Taghreed Jumaa	Director of The Union of Palestinian Women's Committees and political activist
9. Mariam Abu Daqqa	Political activist
10. Shadia Al Ghoul	Feminist activist
11. Sarah Kilani	Human rights activist
12. Fatima Ashour	Human rights activist
13. Feryal Thabet	Director of the Women's Health Centre in Bureij refugee camp
14. Sahar Yaghi	Chairperson of the board of directors at the Institute of Women's Studies
15. Laila Al Mudallal	Community activist

Appendix (2)

Interview Questions:

1. Do you think that any progress was made in Palestine regarding compliance with UN Resolution 1325, and what are the key indicators of this progress in your opinion?
2. How do you assess the levels of political participation, accountability, protection, and recovery of women in Palestinian territories?
3. In your opinion, do the general policies and executive measures applicable in Palestine respond to the requirements of implementing Resolution 1325 in its four pillars (participation, accountability, protection, recovery)? Explain how these policies work to achieve this?
4. From your point of view, what are the most prominent obstacles or challenges facing the localisation of Resolution 1325 in Palestine?
5. What are the key gaps and challenges that impede the localization of Resolution 1325 with its four pillars, whether at the level of policies, laws, or the prevailing culture?
6. What are the basic mechanisms and requirements for promoting women's effective participation in internal peace-building and reconstruction processes in Palestine?
7. For political participation, what should official and non-official structures do to ensure the effective political participation of women?
8. For accountability, what do women need in order to activate their roles in national accountability in all national and societal issues?
9. For protection, what should the Palestinian and civil official organizations do to implement the pillar on protection locally and internationally?
10. For recovery, what are the requirements to ensure the qualitative participation of women at all national and societal levels?
11. What is required of the following bodies to localize Resolution 1325 and all pillars in Palestinian laws and legislations? The general policies of the Palestinian National Authority, the political parties, the civil organizations (feminist and human rights), the traditional bodies and structures in the Palestinian society, the media, universities...
12. Speaking of the UN Resolution and the practices of the Israeli occupation:
 - What are the possible steps to strengthen accountability systems of the occupation?
 - What is required from official bodies?
 - What is required from civil entities?
 - What is required from popular bodies and political parties?
13. How do you assess the ability of the PA and civil society to put pressure on the occupation, especially given its clear violation of the Resolution?

About the Partner

Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA)

CFTA is one of the largest and most active networks of human rights organization in the Gaza Strip. Founded in 1991 as an independent, non-governmental development organization which also provides humanitarian assistance in emergency situations. For more than 30 years, CFTA has worked in the Gaza Strip's middle and southern areas to provide safe, supportive, interactive spaces and opportunities for members of our community in order to gain knowledge, enhance skills, exchange, experience new ideas and to connect members of the society together.

About the SAWT project

The SAWT project seeks to quantitatively and qualitatively increase women's meaningful inclusion in political and peace processes in the MENA region in order to increase their ability to influence outcomes and establish post-conflict gender-egalitarian frameworks through supporting women's integration in all phases of the peacebuilding process. Taking a broader and more holistic view of what "peace processes" mean and look like and focusing on the emergence of a new generation of women activists in MENA, the project proposes four broad areas of work and will involve collaboration with civil society actors, academics, activists, and networks in both Europe and the MENA region.



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