

The Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development



16 Days Campaign to Combat Gender Based Violence Report

2019

The Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development participated in the international “16 Days Campaign to Combat Gender Based Violence” from November 25-December 10, 2019. The theme for this year’s campaign revolved around passing the Family Protection Bill per the amendments made by the civil society organizations. This was crucial in terms of planning the activities and events for the campaign. The campaign also newly involved youth as a target group. Most events engaged university students and youth and incorporated social events that met the demands of the campaign. This year, PWWSD executed the campaign in a way that would switch roles between civil society organizations, decision makers, and between youth and university students. The slogan of the campaign, “Right to Social and Legal Protection”, shaped how the campaign was designed regarding the participants and groups engaged in the activities. This influenced our emphasis on having a Family Protection law to protect women and truly influence social change. The PWWSD found that the youth groups were not engaged in its projects as much as the adults; thus, added focus and efforts was expended towards the youth and university students targeted in the campaign.

Launching the 16 Days Campaign to Combat Gender based Violence

The launching of the “16 Days Campaign” on November 25th 2019 consisted of three parts. The first part took place in the Chamber of Commerce and addressed the two main components of the Campaign: social and legal protection. The aim was to start the campaign by introducing and laying out the demands to the audience and Palestinian society at large. The first



component targeted Palestinian culture's masculine heritage, which produces underlying stereotypical gender roles that underpins gender-based violence. The second component targeted sources of legal protection, which consisted of explaining the Family Protection Bill and the importance of passing it with the amendments made. Hanan Qa'oud, development manager at PWWSD stated in her opening speech the importance of having a “solid social contract represented by a legal system in which all individuals are covered under the law without exception and without discrimination, embodying the culture of rule of law in Palestinian society.”

The result of the session was highlighting the process that social change requires; both in terms of challenging the gender roles constructed by a patriarchal society and in having laws that protect the victims of violence and are implemented in non-



discriminatory ways. It is also worth noting that a sign language specialist interpreted the session which made it accessible to the special needs participants that attended the event.

The second part of the launching event consisted of revealing the “Violence Will End when...” initiative, which was carried out by the PWWSD at five different Palestinian universities in the



West Bank and Gaza. The initiative involved a creative survey which reflected the opinions of students on how they perceive violence and how we can eventually end it. The initiative was also a social experiment to gauge the attitudes of students on the topic of gender based violence and their reactions to it.

The universities that took part in this initiative were the following: Birzeit University, Al Najah University, the University of Bethlehem, Al-Khadouri University and Al-Azhar University. A large white PVC board was provided with the sentence “Violence Will End When...” written on it, and markers on the side of the board for students to express their opinions.

Students initially reacted in a way worth mentioning: They started writing on top of each other’s opinions, thus making the content unreadable. The latter indicated that students felt the need to cover each other’s opinions in order for theirs to be heard. The aim of this initiative was to analyse the way students reacted and thought about violence which was made impossible by the eligible content; thus we were compelled to provide an additional white board layer and remove the first board shortly after it was installed. This then allowed another opportunity for students to express their opinions and for the content to be analysed. However, this also affected the thematic analysis of the initiative as the results were taken from the second boards added, which might not fully reflect all of the opinions and attitudes of the students.

The final part of the launching event was an agricultural section in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and its partners, the Union of Agricultural Cooperative Societies, the Land Research Centre, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, the Applied Research Institute (ARIJ), and the Palestinian Centre for Economic and Social Development of Rural Women. The last activity PWWSD held on that first day of the campaign was a seminar titled “Supporting and Promoting the Rights of Rural Women and their Access to Economic Resources”. During the seminar, the minister of agriculture highlighted the importance of a real partnership between all groups of the community, especially women, when achieving agricultural development. The



seminar also highlighted a need for protections of national products and adding tariffs on imported products to help local women market their products.

The PWWSD finished the first day of the campaign by lighting the Ministry of Agriculture in orange, the official colour of the 16 Days Campaign. The lighting of the Ministry of Agriculture symbolizes a bright future free from violence against women and girls.

Legal Session

On November 26th, the Palestinian Working Woman Association for Development (PWWSD) held a legal session on the adoption of the Family Protection Bill in Bethlehem. During the session, participants discussed a



draft of the bill and the importance of its immediate adoption to ensure the protection of the Palestinian family, particularly women and girls, from all forms of violence and discrimination.

A Workshop on Collective Purchasing

The PWWSD included rural women in the 16 Days Campaign under the We Effect project, titled “Strengthening a Gender-Responsive Environment in the Rural Development and Cooperatives Sector.” PWWSD incorporated sessions and activities that target Palestinian women working in agriculture and raising awareness on the challenges they face both from the occupation and the Palestinian society. The first activity was held at the launching event at the Ministry of Agriculture as mentioned in the previous section. The second activity was a



workshop held on the 28th of November 2019 with PWWSD in partnership with the Palestinian Agricultural Cooperative Union (PACU) on the concepts and methods of collective purchasing and the mobilization of collective purchasing to secure productive resources at a lower cost

and higher quality for the women members of cooperatives. The workshop also focused on utilizing the creative tools of marketing and networking among cooperatives especially since most of these women are the main provider for their families.

A March for Women's Right to Protection and Security

The PWWSD along-side the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization against Domestic Violence against Women (Al Muntada), organized a march on December 2nd 2019. This march was attended by hundreds of women and young people from different regions. The march started from Al-Hamra Palace near the presidential office to Al-Manara square in the centre of the city. The aim of the march was to voice out the demands of the participants to pass the Family Protection Bill per the amendments made by the civil society organizations. The feminist activists and human rights defenders leading the event chanted several slogans calling for an end to violence and discrimination and for holding perpetrators of crimes accountable. Participants also emphasized the need to amend Palestinian laws in compliance with international conventions, especially after Palestine signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).



Despite the fact that the family protection bill draft was discussed by the Gender Equitable Legislation Committee, submitted to the Legislative Harmonization Committee, and referred

to the Council of Ministers, the draft has not yet been approved. The march was concluded by a closing remark that summarized the demands and needs of women and pressured the government and the decision makers to take real action towards the family protection bill.



Workshop on the Water Resources

The PWWSD has conducted another workshop on the 3rd of December 2019, under the We Effect project in partnership with The Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ), titled: “Water resources in the West Bank, and How to Make the Most Efficient Use of Them.” The main outcome of the session highlighted the strategies through which women can make the most efficient use of existing tools for available water resources.

Candlelight Protest and Al Basta Theatre Performance

On December 4th 2019, the PWWSD organized a silent candlelight protest to mourn the victims of “honour killings” and against the ongoing violence against women and girls. Followed the candlelight protest, a play was performed by Al Basta Theatre that told the story of many women and girls in Palestine who are exposed to societal violence. The play also reflected the violence that Palestinian women suffer at the hands of the Israeli Occupation Forces. This event was significant because it presented the case of violence against women and girls in a



refreshingly different and creative way more likely to change the way the society views gender based violence. Parts of the play remained ambiguous to provoke the audience to think and ask more questions about the issue of gender based violence.

Director of the PWWSD Amal Khreisheh demanded an immediate issuance of the Family Protection Bill and emphasized the need for social protection of women and girls in Palestinian society.



Closing Event of the 16 Days Campaign to Combat Gender based Violence

The PWWSD hosted the closing ceremony on the last day of the 16 Days Campaign on December 10th, 2019 at Abdel Mohsin al-Qattan Foundation. The last day of the campaign presented the results of the activities that took part during the 16



Days campaign and evaluated the extent to which the voices of the youth were heard. In other words, the final event was used to brainstorm the long-term objective of the campaign during the up-coming year, particularly, to pass the Family Protection Bill and reduce gender-based violence. The agenda of the closing ceremony was organized in a way that would provide a



platform for the students and youth to freely express their demands directly in front of the decision-makers and civil society organizations. This highlights the new approach the PWWSD is taking regarding the younger generation by more comprehensively listening to what they

have to say about gender based violence and hearing their demands on how to eliminate it rather than imposing our own beliefs or lecturing them.

The ceremony commenced by showcasing the results of the “Violence Ends when...” initiative. This was followed by an open discussion on the attitudes of university students towards combating gender based violence. A presentation and discussion on the results of the “Opinion Poll on Violence against Women” study prepared by the Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) was then conducted before being concluded by a musical session. Dozens of university



students, researchers, civil society organizers, and artists attended the event and actively participated in the discussions about the results of the study and initiative. The initiative was analysed using thematic analysis, as key words on the boards were chosen according to their relevance to the topic. These included the words “religion”, “tradition” and “laws”. The word was enlarged based on the frequency of its use, allowing the audience to get a general idea on the attitudes of the students to the statement. This analysis was printed on posters and presented alongside the boards from the universities.

Some of the discussion outcomes can be summarized as the following:

- Women’s studies course should be a core module at Palestinian universities

- The decision-makers should implement laws that protect women without any exemptions, especially the Family Protection Bill
- Ending gender based violence relies heavily on the way children are raised and the way gender roles are assigned
- There is an absence of laws that protect women and a shortage in awareness seminars in universities, coupled with students' lack of motivation to attend and learn more about the issue of violence against women.



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