



**Protecting Families from Violence is a Societal and Legal Responsibility**  
**The Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD) launches:**  
**Sadaa<sup>1</sup> Campaign**  
**Calling to End Violence against Women and Girls**

“We do not accept the things that we cannot change, we change the things that we cannot accept.”-Angela Davis

Palestinian women and girls continue to face discrimination, murder, abuse and exploitation while not being afforded legal protection. This reflects the Palestinian Authority’s lack of political will to implement its obligations in accordance with the Basic Law and international treaties concerned with gender equality. It is imperative to combat all forms of violence by ensuring a legal and societal environment that provides safety and human security for women and girls. Palestinian women and girls’ exposure to violence takes place within the context of the Zionist military occupation that continues to escalate its suppression and violation of the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, freedom and living in dignity. As of late it is doing so through its implementation of the "Deal of the Century", and the associated policies of annexation of Jerusalem as well as 30% of the West Bank. This reality has multiple destructive effects on our lives as Palestinian women and girls, as we face discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV) under patriarchy and the resulting unequal power dynamics throughout the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

This multiple types of violence Palestinian women and girls are threatened by has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting State of Emergency declared by the Palestinian government on March 5. The State of Emergency order included the imposition of home quarantine and the prevention of movement between governorates, and the suspension of court proceeding. This period saw increased bullying and harassment over social media platforms in addition to families being confined to narrow spaces for an extended amount of time. This is addition to the repercussions of the pandemic on economic life, characterized by increased economic tenuousness and the introduction of large segments of the population, especially women, into poverty all while women tried to cope with increased domestic labour and responsibilities and Israeli military checkpoints continued to restrict Palestinians’ freedom of movement. Women were also excluded from membership in both centralized and local emergency committees and from participation in official and informal media. All of these factors together have entrenched the system of violence against women.

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<sup>1</sup> “Sadaa” is Arabic for “echo”.



Reports from official institutions and local and international civil society organizations all indicate an increase in GBV and in suicide attempts throughout Palestine. A special report issued by the Ministry of Social Development at the end of April showed a stark increase in GBV, especially in the month of March, as the number of officially documented cases reached 37.5%, compared to 16.6% of the total cases. The discriminatory practices that Palestinian women and girls were exposed to daily during the State of Emergency also indicated an increase in cases of violence and social discrimination as demonstrated by the quantitative data of cases that were collected by or on behalf of PWWSD, the Legal and Social Counselling Centre, the Sawa Foundation, and the Counseling Centre in Bethlehem. **PWWSD's analytical report titled "Violence against Women in the Palestinian Territories during the Covid-19 pandemic" covered the period of March 22 to May 21, 2020.** The report "provides a comprehensive analysis of the results of the work of PWWSD's specialists, who during this period gave 1983 consultations which benefited 1834 people (1743 females and 91 males), in addition to 1322 telephone counselling sessions for 924 people (719 females and 23 males). It has been shown through phone calls that **more than 70% of the women who were provided with individual counselling had experienced one or more types of violence from their husbands, whether it was psychological (27%), verbal (32%), physical (26%), economical (9%), or social (4%).** Field work also revealed that **30% of women victims of violence have been subjected to violence by other family members, including their fathers, brothers, or members of their husbands' families.**

As for the **period from May 27 to August 5, 2020**, PWWSD provided 901 consultations which benefited 871 people (845 females, 26 males), in addition to providing 733 telephone counselling sessions for 342 people (336 females, 6 males). Through telephone communications it was found that more than 63% of the women who were provided with individual phone counselling session had been subjected to violence by their husbands, including psychological (28%), verbal (23%), physical (39%), or economical (2%), social (3%), electronic (3%), or sexual (2%). This is in addition to the 48% of the women who were consulted through the support hotlines who had experienced violence from their husbands, including psychological (31%), verbal (29%), physical (30%), or economical (5%), electronic (3%), sexual (1%), or social violence (1%).

The results of the initial survey on violence against women conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in November 2019 indicate the prevalence and severity of GBV. The survey demonstrated that 60% of women were subjected to violence at the hands of either IOF soldiers or settlers. Simultaneously, it was found that **29% of women surveyed were subjected to some form of violence (physical, psychological, economic ...) by their husbands at least once one.** Of those women, **57% were subjected to psychological violence, followed by economic violence at 36.2%, social violence at 27.6%, physical violence at 18%, and sexual at 9%.** According to the same report, the results also indicate a decrease in the percentage of married or previously married women who have been subjected



to some form of violence, with **27% in 2019 compared to 37% in 2011**. This positive though limited change would not have been possible without the accumulated efforts of the feminist movement and institutions committed to eliminating violence against women. This decrease in numbers represents a glimmer of hope for Palestinian women and girls.

There is a lack of available means for women to access justice and solutions that contribute to eliminating violence including legally supported safe. This is one of the factors that contribute to reproducing GBV and thus results in a distorted awareness of GBV not in accordance with international human rights. Relevant international laws and agreements in this regard specifically includes: the Universal Declaration Human Rights - Vienna 1993, which considers women's rights as human rights and thus universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

Based on the significance of the cumulative struggle to confront discrimination against Palestinian women, which PWWSD has been carrying out since the 1990s to the present day through its awareness and mobilization programs, its organizational efforts behind several advocacy and lobbying campaigns, and through the networking and coordination movement with civil society, specifically with Al Muntada Forum to Combat Violence Against Women; the issue of violence was discussed during a community dialogue session, which contributed to the elaboration of policies and strategies for successive Palestinian governments to address GBV crimes. However, the vast majority of these provisions have not been enforced due to the absence of a sufficiently supportive legal environment/infrastructure to protect women and girls from violence. The continuation of murders, sexual harassment and violence in all its forms confirms that the approach of partial and surface-level reforms of a legal text here or there under the present outdated legal system women and girls is not enough to protect women and girls from violence. Instead they will continue to have their lights violated under a system which privileges male and clan-based dominion over the rule of law in violation of the social contract.

Consequently, PWWSD hereby launches the Sadaa campaign, which like its namesake should spread and reverberate throughout the country, in all homes and institutions, and in every street and alley to say: “Violence against women and girls will not be tolerated in any way.” The campaign includes various lobbying and advocacy activities culminating in events targeting all Palestinians and brings together influential activists from various organizational groups and institutions, including women, men, children, and youth alike. The campaign focuses on media activities to raise overall community awareness and social responsibility, condemn the perpetrators of violence, and end violence against Palestinian women and girls whether in the countryside, the cities or refugee camps and whether taking place within the private domestic sphere or in the public domain. Thus, we at PWWSD demand that all Palestinians unite and mobilize efforts to achieve the feminist human rights movement's demand, represented by:



- **Adoption of the Family Protection from Violence bill into law, immediately and in accordance with the vision of civil society institutions and so based on equality and justice**

Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development  
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