



Factsheet

The Palestinian woman on the 8th of March / A gradual decline in rights during Covid-19

Introduction:

The Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (PWWSD) extends its warmest congratulations and best wishes to Palestinian women wherever they may be, to Arab women, and to all women everywhere on the occasion of March 8th, International Women's Day 2021 in the context of the feminist movement's work for freedom, equality and social justice. On this occasion, dear to the hearts of Palestinian women and women everywhere, PWWSD renews its commitment to continue the struggle until the end of the occupation, the establishment of a fully sovereign, democratic, civil state on the 1967 with Jerusalem as its capital, and the resolving of the refugee issue in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions, foremost of which is UN Resolution 194. PWWSD is also committed to fighting for the realization of women's rights as indivisible and interdependent rights and to the democratic feminist movement to change conservative social norms which perpetuate discrimination against women.

Within the last few decades, the demands for women's rights has developed to most frequently emphasize complete equality between the sexes, the abolition of gender-based discrimination, and the development of international and national mechanisms and tools to implement citizenship rights per the obligations outlined in international human rights conventions and international legal references. However, women still suffer from marginalization, discrimination and exclusion that is embodied in laws, social norms and exclusionary policies that reinforce rather than protect from this marginalization. This exclusion and the consequent suffering has only been exacerbated by the spread of Covid-19, which has had long-term catastrophic effects on all but particularly detrimental effects on Palestinian people in general and Palestinian women in particular. This

includes through how lockdown orders infringe on abused Palestinian women's abilities to distance themselves from their abusers, Israeli colonial policies which severely restrict Palestinians' movement and access to basic goods such as electricity and the weak rule of law by the Palestinian Authority which leaves Palestinian women vulnerable. The structural political, economic, social, and humanitarian, health, security, infrastructural and other issues and concerns preceded the pandemic and now are continuing to worsen as the pandemic is most likely to have the worst effect on the most marginalized members of Palestinian society, including Palestinian women.

For International Women's Day 2021, in this paper PWWSD has gathered a set of facts about the reality of Palestinian women in order to shed light on the political, social and legislative contexts in which Palestinian women live, including the setbacks to women's rights posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and ends by presenting a set of clear demands to eliminate uncertainty and hesitation in the work that lies ahead.

Firstly: The Impact of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian women during Covid-19

In light of the continued Israeli settler colonial occupation of Palestine and its continued imposition of its control over the Palestinian lands and the Palestinian economy (such that the Palestinian economy is dependent on the Israeli economy), Palestinian women and girls are undergoing multiple types of violence during the pandemic, whether directly through home demolitions, arrest and detention, physical violence, economic exploitation, restrictions of movement and isolation, sieges and blockages, or indirect violence as a form of collective punishment by targeting family members. A recent report presented by the CEDAW coalition in June 2020, which includes a wide range of civil feminist organizations, including the General Union of Palestinian Women¹, working on women's issues and protection from violence demonstrates that the home lockdown orders have led to an increase in the number of women and girls who are subjected to violence by a family member and an increase in the frequency of violence against women and girls due to continuous proximity to abusers. Women and girls with disabilities have also experienced a doubling in the rate of violence practiced against them, due to the increase in restrictions on them due to societal stigma in addition to being considered "dependents".

Due to the policy of restrictions on movement, closures and home confinement, all governmental and non-governmental institutions in the West Bank have resorted on-and-

¹ <https://gupw.net/assets/files/an-ar.pdf>

-as Nadera Shalhoub saults on Palestinian daily and domestic life population” through as Kevorkian has written.⁵

The political arena is also witnessing a collapse of the so-called peace process and an obstacle to Palestinians’ political future as illegal settlements continue to expand, land continues to be confiscated and Palestinians continue to be ethnically cleansed from Jerusalem, and as the Israeli occupation continues to its intransigence in denying the Palestinians’ right to self-determination, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and the return of refugees to their homes from which they were displaced in accordance with United Nations resolutions. It continues to do so by ignoring the international legitimate decisions issued by the United Nations and overall undermining the efficacy of international conventions and norms, foremost among the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions, and all international resolutions issued by the United Nations related to the Palestinian cause.

In the dimension of the repressive measures and daily violations, the occupation continues its repressive measures and daily violations against our people, including day and night raids and house demolitions with 2020 being the year with the most demolitions of Palestinian homes recorded yet according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which periodically documents violations of arrests and restrictions on movement including in Jerusalem, the deliberate killing of citizens including from zero-distance, the continued imposition of siege on our people in the Gaza Strip, the continuation of administrative detention of women and men, and the overall denial of the most basic human rights of prisoners, which were exemplified in the denial of their demands for basic rights to health, safety, and to communicate with their families.

In regards to Palestinian political prisoners, phone calls are being denied to most prisoners⁶ even if they have contracted Covid-19 and wish to inform their families, and the Israeli supreme court recently ruled that Palestinian prisoners have no right to social distancing during a pandemic,⁷ thereby deliberately ensuring as many Palestinians contract Covid-19 as possible while Israeli prisoners were let free in the hundreds in the

⁵ It is Our Belief that Palestine is a Feminist Issue

<https://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/feministsatlaw/article/view/107/282>

⁶ Rights groups to High Court: Palestinian prisoners must have phone contact with their families during COVID-19 <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/122675>

⁷ Israeli Supreme Court rules: Palestinian prisoners have no right to social distancing protection against COVID-19 Adalah Legal Center <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/10063>

beginning of the pandemic.⁸ Furthermore, the occupation government after pressure from human rights groups was forced to commit to vaccinating Palestinian prisoners, though still demanding to vaccinate prisoners last after prison staff,⁹ even as hundreds of Palestinian political prisoners have contracted Covid-19 in the crowded and unhygienic conditions of Israeli prisons. This is in the context of Israel's highly racist vaccination deployment program which brags of vaccinating diplomats and illegal Israeli settlers but not the Palestinians living under the boot of Israeli colonial control.¹⁰

These measures and policies are increasing even as the pandemic continues to worsen and Palestinian hospitals have reached critical capacity, necessitating another lockdown order. The direness of current conditions is documented in messages sent by the permanent representative of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, Minister Riyad Mansour on 6/1/2021 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the Security Council, and the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, on the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the ongoing and escalating illegal policies and practices of the occupying power. Mansour referred to its continuing violent arrest and detention campaigns in occupied Palestine during the year 2020, pointing out that the Israeli occupation forces arrested 4,636 Palestinians, including 543 minors under the age of 18 years and 128 women and continued its policy of administrative detention, the most blatantly arbitrary form of detention where the occupation has deemed an actual charge unnecessary. 380 Palestinians are currently under administrative detention, including children and women. This is in addition to the suffering of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners currently suffering from serious and chronic diseases.

Meanwhile the violent attacks of Israeli settlers continue on to extreme lengths, including the uprooting and burning of trees and agricultural crops, deliberately meant to destroy the livelihoods of Palestinian families and while other settlers continue to disrespect holy sites, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

⁸ COVID-19: Israel Must Release Palestinian Prisoners in Vulnerable Situation, Say UN Experts – Press Release <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/covid-19-israel-must-release-palestinian-prisoners-in-vulnerable-situation-say-un-experts-press-release/>

⁹ Israel prison service to vaccinate Palestinian inmates <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210117-israel-prison-service-to-vaccinate-palestinian-inmates>

¹⁰ NGO, PNIN & PHROC JOINT STATEMENT: RACISM AND INSTITUTIONALISED DISCRIMINATION IN THE ROLL-OUT OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE <https://www.addameer.org/news/pngo-pnin-phroc-joint-statement-racism-and-institutionalised-discrimination-roll-out-covid-19>

All the aforementioned requires the international community to hold Israel accountable and demand it explicitly and clearly to stop its repeated violations against the Palestinian people in all areas of life, including lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip and its immediate cessation of all its settlement activities in the West Bank, which seeks to make Annexation establish 'facts on the ground' which has escalated during the Trump era and continues to escalate, including in East Jerusalem, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law that amounts to serious violations and war crimes.

Thus, PWWSO welcomes the decision of the International Criminal Court on February 5, 2021, which stipulates that the court has jurisdiction over war crimes or atrocities committed in the Palestinian territories, opening the way for an investigation into the crimes of the occupation and accountability for all perpetrators of crimes against the Palestinian people of all levels and positions, whether perpetrated by settlers or high-ranking Israeli military officer and politicians.

Thirdly: The Continuation of Divisions is a National Crisis

On the other hand, the Palestinian people in general, and Palestinian women in particular, are still facing the consequences of the continuing division in the Palestinian arena and the devastating effects it has left over the past 15 years in terms of weakening the national liberation struggle, fragmenting and distorting the social fabric, and deepening human rights violations. In the face of this challenge and its political, economic, social and ethical implications, PWWSO continues its efforts alongside other civil society actors to end this division. The disruption of the Legislative Council's work and the obstacles placed before passing important legislation, including those related to women's protection from violence continues to have detrimental effects. Drafts for more comprehensive legal protections continue to be blocked, including the two drafts of the Penal Code and the Family Protection from Violence Law, under the pretext of Legislative Council delays.

Nevertheless, recent developments that occurred in the Palestinian arena following the issuance of the Presidential Decree early 2021, related to determining the dates for legislative and presidential elections, may constitute a ground and an entry point to end the division and begin to restore legislative and civil life. More work must be done by work and other social and youth movements to end political divisions and utilize the elections as an entry point for consensus on a common national program with the participation of political and civil society actors, especially women and youth in the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

Fourth: The continued exclusion and marginalization of women in Palestine in light of the Covid-19 and consequent setbacks:

Although the Palestinian Basic Law affirms the principle of equal rights between the sexes, and despite Palestine's accession to many international conventions and covenants in 2014, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which represented an important step towards safeguarding the rights of Palestinian women and the follow up shadow reports by the Women's National Coalition to implement CEDAW, which includes the General Union of Palestinian Women and women's and human rights institutions, the biggest challenge remains in incorporating these international agreements, including CEDAW, into the local laws, as well as in the next Palestinian constitution, especially since the CEDAW agreement has not been published in the Palestinian Official Gazette which would make its implementation mandatory.

Thus, the State of Palestine has not taken sufficient measures, policies, and measures to change the cultural structures based on discrimination and the inferior view of women, which constitutes an obstacle to the advancement of the status of Palestinian women. As rates of gender-based violence increased, women continued to not be represented in central and subsidiary committees of the emergency committees, and the intervention of women's institutions, in coordination with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, led to minor adjustments in the field of representation and female presence in these committees. Women whose jobs were damaged, especially those working in the cooperative, agricultural and informal sectors, were not compensated.

Fifth: Instances of Continued Discrimination against Women

Palestinian women in the eyes of our society are seen as having politics done to and around us rather than as active decision makers and makers of politics. This is evident in the many obstacles facing Palestinian women, including the outdated legislative structure that is still based on discrimination against women, and which does not protect women from the increased rates of gender-based violence as well as the exclusion of women from political participation from decision-making roles. Discriminatory ideas against women is embedded in school curricula, where images and lesson plans betray the lack of adherence to principles of gender equality. This is despite the formation of a joint committee between the Ministries of Women and Education with civil society to review the curricula from a gender perspective in 2019, with the committee unable to provide a report or vision to amend the stereotypes of female roles.

The media, in particular through social media, also entrenches discrimination against women and reproduces traditional values and stereotypes of the roles of women, showing a clear prejudice to the system of discrimination against women.

Sixth: The economic conditions of Palestinian women in light of Covid-19: Decline and Deterioration

The reality of women has been greatly affected by the conditions and factors mentioned above which all have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Women have also been disproportionately held back economically due to the weakness of the necessary measures to encourage women to join the labor market and create and own their projects that would enable them to access resources and property, including ensuring their full inheritance rights. Likewise, Palestinian women also have the absence of social protection, social security laws and labour market protective policies, whether in the organized or unorganized sector, the insufficient implementation of the minimum wage law, and the overall protection of women from economic exploitation and workplace harassment to contend with.

The aforementioned manifests in the doubling of the rates of economic violence directed whether in the workplace or family members who can more easily keep them in abusive situations according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics survey issued in late 2019 which also demonstrated that rural women are most impacted by these adverse economic conditions. Furthermore, a 2020 study by PWWSD titled the “Impact of the Israeli Military Occupation on the Access of Rural Women to their Economic Rights” demonstrated the extent to which rural women are affected, whether by the occupation measures or the lack of adequate economic measures and policies that support and enhance the resilience of women, especially in light of the pandemic Corona. As it was reported in the study, 76.3% of women work in the family's agricultural lands without pay compared to 11.4% of men, while the percentage of women working in agriculture with employers was 0.3% compared to 6.6% for men. The study also showed that the effects of Covid-19 doubled the severity of the problem in terms of the inability of Palestinian farmers and cooperatives to produce and market their products and crops in the absence of supportive policies and facilities for them, and the same study stresses that women's ownership, access to and control of land must not be separated from the right to collective and equal enjoyment of resources for all Palestinians.

Furthermore, Palestinian women's participation in the workforce in the Palestinian territories is still low and did not exceed 18% according to the figures issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for the year 2019 which has further decreased

dramatically during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, unemployment rates continue to rise among Palestinians general and women in particular, as the economic environment is still characterized by a low growth rate and limited job opportunities including among young educated women. The same applies to the increase in poverty rates, especially in the Gaza Strip, as its intensity increased with the continuation of repressive Israeli measures that stifle local human and financial resources. Women and children are considered among the segments that are classified as the poorest of the poor, especially women who head families, whose percentage reaches 11% all while women take on the vast majority of household labour regardless of the family's source of income.

Seven: Shocking Increase of Gender-Based Violence in the Midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Domestic and societal violence is still high in Palestinian society, and its intensity has increased as a result of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, undoing the previous decrease in rates of exposure to all forms of violence which preceded the pandemic as shown by the results of the latest survey societal violence survey issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in late 2019. The survey showed that the percentage of women reached 29% of those who have experienced some form of violence by their husbands at least once, the highest being psychological violence that affected 57% of women, economic violence at 36%, and social violence at 27.6%, followed by physical violence at 18% and sexual violence at 9%.

During the course of the pandemic, the bullying of women increased on social media, according to reports and studies issued by several local and international human rights and feminist institutions, PWWSD. Meanwhile, a report on the number of psychosocial interventions implemented by PWWSD in mid-2020, demonstrated the need across governorates during the first few months of the pandemic.¹¹ The report on the increase of violence during Covid-19 previously alluded to in this report documented how 70% of the women who were counseled had been exposed to one or more forms of violence from their husbands, and while fieldwork for the same period showed that 30% of the battered women had been subjected to violence by other family members.

The report also proved that that one of the main causes of violence that contributed to the increase in the rate of violence is the weakness of social protection networks by the official authorities and the stopping of the courts from working, which has negatively

¹¹ GBV prevention and psycho-social support during the COVID-19 Emergency Situation
<https://pwwsd.org/single-library/25/en>

affected the rights of women as a result of the repeated stopping of the tools of justice from the work and weaknesses in the National Referral System.

Of course, violence against women was not confined to the home, but also in the street and in the workplace, in addition to the escalation of the killing of women in recent years, as nearly 32 cases murdered women and children were recorded in 2020 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Eight: Insufficient Social Protection Measures and Laws Tucked away in Drawers

Although the feminist movement was able to make some progress as a result of pressure and influence, including compelling the State of Palestine to amend Penal Code provisions, including Article (98) in Decree Law No.(10) of 2014, to remove all justifications of femicide as well as the abolition of Article (308) of the Penal Code No. (16) of 1960 which encouraged rape victims marrying their rapists, as well as the only amendment made to the Personal Status Law, in effect since the beginning of the year 2020 which raised the age of marriage for males and females alike to a minimum of 18. However, this victory in combatting the age of minors has been undermined somewhat by the exploitation of legal loopholes and exceptions which increased over the course of this pandemic as demonstrated by the shadow report for the State of Palestine report issued in September 2020 by the Women's Center for Legal Advice and the Al Muntada Forum against Violence. He pointed out that 33% of marriage contracts registered in the Sharia courts in the West Bank were for minor girls. This must be rectified to remove such legal loopholes which allows this abhorrent practice and which places far too much power in the hands of individual judges.

Overall there is a continued existence of a legal environment which reinforces discrimination against women and does not deal with them as full-fledged citizens, especially the continuing absence of the Personal Status Law, Palestinian penalties and Family Protection form Violence Law, which the feminist movement has struggled to pass for more than fifteen years, and most of what has been achieved as a result of these efforts was presented to the Council of Ministers in the year 2020 and approved in the first reading pending approval in its final form while duty-bearers exploit the pretext that the pandemic is what is causing delays to ensuring women's rights. However, women's and human rights institutions attribute the real reason for this delay to the absence of the political will of the Palestinian duty-bearers to create an integrated protection system for Palestinian women instead choosing to pander to fundamentalist and conservative forces rather than meet Palestinian women's heightened needs.

Nine: Women's Political Participation, Running in Circles

As for political participation and decision-making, the status of women in this field has stagnated, and the percentage of women's representation is still low at all levels of decision-making, despite the decision issued by the Central Council meeting in 2015 and the National Assembly in 2018 decided to raise the quota of women's participation to 30% in all levels of decision-making.

However, the percentage of women's representation remains low, as is the priority to raise this representation which was clearly evident in the presidential decree issued in early 2021 which announced the elections but also set women's quota in electoral lists lower than agreed upon at 25-26% and not even regarding the final election outcomes. It is no wonder then that the figures issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics show that the local elections that took place in 2017 resulted in the victory of only 21.1% of women, and that 82% of judges are males compared to 18%. Additionally, 83.3% of the Public Prosecution Office are males compared to 16.7% of females, while ambassadors and workers in the diplomatic corps make up 11% of women compared with 89% of males, and about 23.2% of the members of the student councils are females compared to 76.8% of males, the percentage of women's representation in the National Council is 11%, the Central Council is at 5%, and only 14% in the Council of Ministers are women. Only one woman occupies the position of governor out of 16 male governors, and female political party members generally suffer from exclusion from leadership positions in higher decision-making bodies that do not exceed a total of 20%. The biggest evidence of the marginalization of women by political parties is the experience of the last local elections that took place in 2017, when women were not involved in negotiating the formation of lists in most of the sites, and the parties did not adhere to a quota of 30% or more. Finally, while women represent 13% of all workers in administrative positions, they constitute only 3% of the employees in decision-making centers.

Ten: Women's Participation in Emergency Committees and Political Parties Reconciliation during Covid-19

As for the role of women in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic, despite the tireless efforts made by women's institutions in responding to and addressing the pandemic, especially in marginalized areas, women have been excluded from actual participation and representation in preparing emergency plans and the national emergency committees to respond to the crisis in gender-sensitive ways. In the West Bank, the percentage of women participating in the central emergency committees and support committees formed from local councils, numbering nearly 400, did not exceed between 14% - 16%,

while the emergency committees formed in the Gaza Strip had no women in decision-making positions even as women were putting in most of the work and represent most of the people in need. The feminist and human rights movement need to lobby to include women in these committees unfortunately comes as an extension of the difficulties in allowing women to access decision-making positions pre-pandemic.

This was evident even in the membership of the delegations that were formed to discuss ending partisan and other divisions, the most recent of which were the meetings of high-ranking political figures held on February 8, 2021, in which women, youth and civil society were weakly represented.

Eleven: Continuous Fundamentalist Conservative Attacks through Hate Speech

Palestinian women have been and are exposed to successive campaigns by fundamentalist and conservative societal groups and forces which aim to undermine women's rights and discourage them from continuing to demand equal rights and the protection needed to live in safety and security free of discrimination socially, politically, economically, culturally etc.

These attacks - which intensified in the year 2020 - were represented in many forms, the most recent of which was the fierce and sharp attack on women, by tribes and religious fundamentalist political parties on women in general, and the feminist, human rights and media movement following the State of Palestine signing on to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, ever since, Palestinian politicians have been using religion, customs and traditions as flimsy arguments and evidence to challenge the efficacy of the implementation of the convention, effectively working to toss aside the decades-long struggle of Palestinian women for and within the national movement. This attack had negative repercussions not only on women, but also on the entire national movement, civil society institutions, the government level, human rights and media institutions, etc.

Demonstrations and direct threats to women's cadres and institutions commenced which called for the withdrawal of the State of Palestine's accession to this convention despite the negative effects this withdrawal would have on the status of Palestinian women and of Palestinians as a whole in front of the world.

Although these attacks affected many parties, whether at the level of decision-makers, the government or political parties, unfortunately all of the above did not take sufficient action to address this onslaught in which the interests of fundamentalist, tribal and conservative traditional forces converged, with the exception of issuing some toothless

statements. As a result of the continuous pressures of the feminist movement, a meeting was held during the month of October 2020, which included national political factions, human rights and feminist institutions, as well as political, societal and religious personalities. The issues covered in the meeting demonstrated the political will of the women's rights coalition to continue advocating for women's issues in a continuous and systematic manner despite the ongoing reactionary onslaught.

The coalition included the Women's Coalition for Justice and Equality (ERADA) and had a number of achievements, among them the approval to raise the age of marriage for both sexes to 18 years previously mentioned and pushing decision-makers to approve set of decisions, namely the right of women to open and manage bank accounts for their minor children, and to transfer them from one school to another, and the right to issue passports for them. This attack also comes in the midst of lobbying and advocacy campaigns organized by human rights, feminist and youth organizations in the global campaign against gender-based violence, all of which focused on the need to end discrimination against women in legislation, and demanded the passage of the Family Protection from Violence Law and the Personal Status Law on the basis of equality. In addition, pressure continues to publish the CEDAW Agreement in the Palestinian Official Gazette, with the aim of implementing it and harmonizing national legislation and the various administrative structures in accordance with its provisions.

PWWSD: 40 Years of Giving Back

In the midst of all the above, played a pioneering role in on the national and feminist levels in Palestinian society and as an essential part of the Palestinian feminist movement. Throughout the stages of the Palestinian national struggle, PWWSD made every effort to strengthen and empower women and increase their participation in development processes with the aim of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, based on the premise that women's rights are human rights and that women's issues in the Palestinian case should be considered the political and social issues of all Palestinians. Therefore, it considers that the progress of the Palestinian national, social and economic society can only be achieved with the active participation of women in development on an equal footing across all areas.

PWWSD's pioneering role was felt during its interventions during the pandemic which has had disastrous effects on women globally and which exposed the fragility of

protection and justice systems in many countries including in Palestine where continuous conflict, settler colonialism, wars, racism and militarism, and land theft continued to have devastating effects on Palestinian women in particular ways. Thus, in 2020, PWWSD as an independent feminist human rights institution worked to empower Palestinians facing all the violations imposed by the Zionist occupiers for more than seventy years.

From the beginning of the pandemic, PWWSD was among the first civil society organizations to implement an emergency plan during the first total lockdown period, working through the grassroots bodies it had established over the past years including unions for kindergarten workers, women's cooperatives, youth forums and women's shadow councils in local government, spread throughout 83 locations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, PWWSD provided psychosocial counseling support through telephone counseling, provided relief assistance, promoted the orientation to agriculture and home economics, and participated in emergency committees.

PWWSD also provided professional advice and developed the capacities of eight civil society institutions. As a result of this intervention, the development of eight more emergency plans responding to the rise in gender-based during the pandemic were established. The organization's work continued in the field of combating gender-based violence, empowering women's political participation, developing the women's agenda for peace, security and economic empowerment, including support for mainstreaming gender equality and social justice in the policies, strategies and programs of civil society institutions that work in support of agricultural cooperatives, and the publishing of studies, policy papers, films, training guides, and media materials all contribute qualitatively and quantitatively to the development of feminist literature and to the development of feminist advocacy tools and pressure for the achievement of freedom, equality and justice.

Demands and Entitlements: What is next?

International Women's Day is an important milestone for Palestinian women and women all over the world. Celebrating this occasion can include reflecting on the militant aspects of the feminist movement in its work to fundamentally transform society and in its contribution to national liberation movements. The Palestinian woman is a model to be emulated, as she fights for her demands as a citizen with full rights, side by side with all other Palestinians for liberation from the Israeli occupation and its regressive policies. Thus, PWWSD on this milestone, looking towards the future of women's liberation, demands the following:

- Urging international bodies, including the United Nations to hold Israel accountable by compelling it to adhere to international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and by expediting the trial of Zionist war criminals at the International Criminal Court; to oblige the occupying state to provide protection for civilians under occupation, and to abide by international human rights law. Failure to respect these conventions and charters leaves a major impact on Palestinian women's priorities and delays their progress in changing their reality on the basis of gender equality and on the basis of the right to live freely and in human security.
- Calling on the Palestinian factions and parties to take immediate and rapid action to complete efforts to end the division and restore national unity, and to agree on a national strategy and a political program that guarantees the participation throughout the Palestinian political spectrum. The division has a negative impact on the continuation of the division on our national cause or the lives of citizens in general and women in particular, and the holding of local and general elections (Legislative and presidential), and to complete the formation of the Palestinian National Council within the timetable set by the Presidential Decrees for that, as it is a national, legal and societal entitlement on behalf of the Palestinian people, and on the basis that elections are considered a gateway to end the division and restore national unity.
- The need for the State of Palestine to adhere to taking adequate measures, policies and measures to raise awareness of and the change cultural, economic, social and political structures based on discrimination and the inferior view of women, which has formed and remains an obstacle to the progress of the status of Palestinian women.
- Demanding the State of Palestine and the Palestinian government assume its responsibilities towards conducting a comprehensive review of the system of laws to ensure that CEDAW is included in the local laws as an entitlement to join this agreement, including the need to publish this agreement in the Palestinian Gazette to make it effective on the ground
- The need to work on the continuation of joint efforts and advocacy among civil society organizations, to reform the legal system for the protection of women from violence, including, finally, the adoption of the Family Protection from Violence Law and to address deficiencies in the laws in force and their conflict between the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, evident in penal and personal status laws, thus improving the ability to respond to women's needs so impeded by geographic fragmentation
- Increasing the budgets of economic programs targeting women who are subjected to violence, and adopting the fair distribution of financial resources, as well as the quantitative and qualitative enhancement of human resources in dealing with women who are subjected to violence.
- Institutions give broader attention to empowering women with disabilities and women in marginalized areas, and aligning interventions and programs with their needs for protection from violence

The 8th of March will remain a point of reflection on how to advance the struggle for Palestinian women's liberation. PWWSD will continue to strive for a free and democratic Palestinian society based on social justice and gender equality which aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination by empowering and mobilizing women to participate in development processes and promoting women's civil rights and their rights as a part of human rights, indivisible, interdependent, and not up for other interpretation.

Occupied Palestine

March 8th, 2021