

Shadow Report on ICCPR

Submissions to the Human Rights
Committee, 134th Session
Considerations on Israel's Fifth Periodical Report

Joint submission by:

Women Against Violence,
Nazareth Nursery Institution,
The Working Group for Equality in Personal Status Issues,
Kayan Feminist Organization

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1. Introduction to the Report and its Objectives

This is a joint report submitted by a coalition of feminist organizations working on the promotion of the rights of Palestinian women, citizens of Israel. **In this report, the term “Palestinian women” refers exclusively to Palestinian women, who are citizens of Israel.**

Palestinian women in Israel constitute part of the indigenous Palestinian community in the State and comprise approximately 10% of Israel’s population. Palestinian women are not a monolithic group. They live in various cities, towns, and villages throughout Israel, including unrecognized villages, Arab localities, and mixed towns and cities. Palestinian women live in communities that are also diverse in terms of their religious composition (Muslim, Christian, Druze, and other groups) and secular communities as well.

Living in a state that defines itself as a Jewish State, Palestinian women are subjected to multi-layered discrimination, not only as members of a national minority but also as women who are affected by internal patriarchal societal structures.

This intersectional discrimination prevents Palestinian women in Israel from enjoying the rights granted by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other human rights treaties on an equal footing.

This report aims to shed the light on Israel’s failure to meet its international obligations under the ICCPR concerning key issues that constitute a violation of the basic human rights of Palestinian women citizens in Israel.

2. Selected Issues

2.1 Articles 2(1), 3 and 26 – Right to Equality and Non-Discrimination

Israel lacks constitutional protection of the principle of equality. In its Concluding Observations on Israel's Fourth Periodic Report (CCPR/C/ISR/CO/3), the HRC expressed its concern that "the principle of equality and non-discrimination is not explicitly codified in the State party's Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty 5752-1992, which serves as the State party's bill of rights, despite its recognition as a fundamental principle in the State party's legal system" (para. 7). The HRC was also concerned over the differential treatment of Jewish and non-Jewish populations since the State maintains a three-tiered system of laws affording the civil status, rights, and legal protection for Jewish Israeli citizens, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem (see ICCPR arts. 2 and 26).

The passage of the Nation-State Basic Law (hereinafter the Basic Law) on 19 July 2018 only exacerbates the previously existing racial inequality between Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel.¹ According to the Basic Law, "the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people". The exclusion of non-Jewish citizens from the right to self-determination is translated into specific operative principles. Those include the exclusive right of Jews to automatic citizenship upon immigrating to Israel; the duty to encourage, promote and establish Jewish settlements; the designation of Hebrew as the only official language of the State, whereas Arabic is stripped of its official status and is downgraded to a language with "special" status; and that the State symbols and holidays are exclusively Jewish.

¹H. Jabareen and S. Bishara, "The Jewish Nation-State Law", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 48, No. 2 (2019).

With the adoption of the Basic Law, the preferential treatment of Jewish citizens became a founding constitutional principle, dividing Jewish citizens and non-Jewish citizens into two separate classes of citizenship.² In placing Jewish citizens as superior in the legal hierarchy, Palestinian citizens of Israel are excluded from the political community that constitutes the locus of sovereignty.³ Their democratic and gendered rights are severely curtailed. As a result, Palestinian women citizens of Israel are rendered increasingly vulnerable and more susceptible to human rights violations than ever before.

Furthermore, Israel fails to recognize the notion of intersectional discrimination, which also exacerbates the vulnerability of Palestinian women in Israel. The United Nations human rights treaty bodies, including the HRC, have already recognized the notion of intersectional discrimination. The HRC has clarified that:

Discrimination against women is often intertwined with discrimination on other grounds such as race, colour, language, religion, political or another opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or another status. States parties should address how any instances of discrimination on other grounds affect women in a particular way and include information on the measures taken to counter these effects.⁴

²Y. Jabareen (2018). "The nation-state Law and Jewish supremacy. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics*", (Economics, and Culture, 2018), 23(4), 16-22.

³Jabareen and Bishara, "The Jewish Nation-State Law"; Sonia Boulos, "The Nation State Law and the internal right to self- determination of Palestinian citizens of Israel", in *Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People. Facts and Dimensions*, Honaida Ghanim ed. (MADAR, 2019).

⁴ICCPR GC 28, art. 30 (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.10).

Still, Israel fails to act upon this duty. This is reflected, *inter alia*, in the lack of disaggregated data on Palestinian women citizens of the State in key areas, such as gender violence. It is also reflected in the absence of an intersectional approach in official State policies addressing human rights violations affecting Palestinian women.

2.2. Article 6 – Right to Life

Gender violence targeting Palestinian women citizens of Israel

Under the ICCPR and other human rights treaties, Israel has the duty to adopt operational and general preventative measures to combat violence against women. However, statistics show that this duty is not being fulfilled.

According to official data published on femicide cases in Israel in 2020– 2021, Palestinian women were over-represented as victims, accounting for 58% of overall femicide victims while constituting only 18% of Israel’s women population. Of those victims, 73% filed a complaint to the police before their murder.⁵ Another indicator that suggests that the police are not meeting their due diligence duty in protecting Palestinian women from gender

⁵S. Batshon, “A Comparative research report: Israeli police law enforcement of Palestinian femicide cases” (Women Against Violence and Al-Tufula Center, 2021. Retrieved from https://www.wavo.org/uploads//releases_pdf/39795302520211202125839816744822.pdf (Last accessed on 30 January 2022); I. Avgar et al, “Concentration of Data for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women: Murder of Women, Violence Against Women by Their Spouses, Domestic Violence During the Coronavirus Crisis,” (the Knesset Research and Information Center, November 2020).

violence is the fact that between the years 2010-2017, 80% of the Palestinian women who were murdered had previously filed a complaint to the police, compared to 40% among Jewish femicide victims.⁶

Recent reports published by several feminist organizations on Palestinian femicide in Israel demonstrate that the police forces are substantially less efficient in handling gender violence cases affecting Palestinian women than similar crimes targeting Jewish women.⁷ A major problem highlighted by these reports is the lack of disaggregated data, based on national identity, in official statistics on gender violence. For example, between 2008 and 2018, the Israeli police refused to answer petitions requesting information based on disaggregated data on femicide under the pretext that they do not wish to label certain societal groups as being more violent.⁸ The police have also refused to provide the number of Palestinian victims who filed complaints before their murder between 2015 and 2020.⁹

Likewise, the Ministry of Justice was requested to provide information on the number of indictments filed in femicide cases involving Palestinian women citizens of Israel between 2015 and 2020. The Ministry of Justice too responded that it could not provide such information because it requires examining all murders files committed within the established time frame.

⁶H. Zoabi, "A Report Presented to the State Comptroller: Crime in Arab Society, Negligence in Police Work", (2017).

⁷S. Batshon, "A Comparative research report", p. 7; R. Anabtawi *et al*, "Research report: femicide: a grim reality and possibilities for resistance" (Kayan Feminist Organization, 2021).

⁸Batshon, "A comparative research report"; Anabtawi *et al*, "Research report".

⁹Anabtawi *et al*, "Research report".

As a consequence of the refusal of the police forces to provide the requested information, Women against Violence filed a petition to the District Court of Jerusalem under the Freedom of Information Law, 5758 - 1998 against the Israeli Police to obtain data.¹⁰

Eventually, the information provided by the authorities allowed the examination of 233 femicide cases between 2008 and 2018. Those cases involved 129 Jewish and 104 Palestinian victims.

A joint report published by various feminist organizations, focusing on the above-mentioned data, found a wide gap in indictment rates between Jewish and Palestinian victims. An indictment was filed in 94.3% of the crimes involving a Jewish victim, compared to only 56% in cases involving a Palestinian victim. The report also found that the conviction rate stood at 75% in cases involving Jewish victims, compared to 34 % when the victim was a Palestinian. Moreover, the average sentence imposed on convicted offenders for murder or manslaughter in Jewish femicide cases is 14– 18 years, compared to 5.5 years in Palestinian femicide cases. These statistics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Indictments, convictions, and sentences for Jewish and Palestinian femicides

	Indictments	Convictions	Average length of sentence
Jewish women femicide victims	94.3%	75%	14– 18 years
Palestinian women citizens of Israel femicide victims	56%	34%	5.5 years

Source: research by Palestinian feminist civil society organizations in Israel on femicide victims, 2008– 2018.¹¹

¹⁰Administrative Petition, The Association Women and Girls Against Violence v. Israel Police, 43903, (Aug. 20, 2020). Retrieved from https://01368b10-57e4-4138-acc3-01373134d221.usfiles.com/ugd/01368b_96013e275b1b40eeb3651b71dd697512.pdf (Last accessed 30 January 2022).

The lack of adequate response of law enforcement agencies to gender violence crimes within the Palestinian community in Israel discourages many victimized Palestinian women from reporting abuse to the police.¹² This is tragically illustrated in the case presented in Box 1.

Box 1. The case of Wafa Abahra

In the case of Wafa Abahra, murdered in 2020, all relevant authorities in Israel, including the justice system, welfare, and the police, knew about the case, but none provided her with proper protection. A phone call between the victim and a police officer while Wafa was in a shelter for women victims of violence before the murder occurred reveals a harsh picture of disrespectful and negligent treatment. Below are parts of the recording of the conversation, from a report aired on Kan 11:¹³

Wafa: “I don’t know, but what I know now is that it is your job as a police officer to protect me and the girls, and it will be, like, you’re aware of everything, I’m coming out [of the shelter] and I need protection.”

Policeman: “Wafa, don’t teach me my job.”

Wafa: “Sorry, I didn’t mean it, but, like, I’m coming out, and the same things haven’t changed. [...] the fear and concerns are still the same.”

Policeman: “If the same concerns are still there, then don’t come out. What we’ve done, nowhere else would you get such a service.”

Wafa: “I still don’t know what you did.”

A short while later, Wafa was stabbed to death by her spouse after she left a session of the court regarding the his violent past, it took the police **three weeks** to find and arrest him.¹⁴

¹¹ Batshon, “A comparative research report”;

¹² Anabtawi *et al*, “Research report”, p. 13.

¹³ “When the Judge and the Cops Are Men, Wafaa Abahra Doesn’t Stand a Chance,” Siha Mekomit, 12.11.2020.(in Hebrew). Retrieved from [link](#) (last accessed 29 January 2022).

¹⁴ Conclusion of the Investigation Into the Murder of the Deceased Wafa Abahra, Who Was Stabbed to Death Near Araba, Who Was Stabbed to Death Near Araba, **Israel Police**, 28.1.2021, (in Hebrew).Retrieved from

https://www.gov.il/he/departments/news/police_northern_district_murder_solve_28012021 (last accessed 29 January 2022).

Israel Police, 28.1.2021, (in Hebrew).Retrieved from

https://www.gov.il/he/departments/news/police_northern_district_murder_solve_28012021

In addition to the failure of law enforcement agencies to adopt adequate operational measures to prevent and respond to gender violence targeting Palestinian women in Israel, general preventative plans also fail to meet the needs of this group of women.

In 2002, the Israeli Government established the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Femicide. This committee remained inactive until 2016. The Committee was unable to fulfill its mandate due to legal obstacles blocking its access to information on femicide cases from the relevant authorities. In December 2021, the Women's Advancement Committee in the Knesset held a meeting to discuss the mandate and performance of the Committee on Femicide.¹⁵ During the meeting it became evident that the Committee lacks an intersectional framework in its mandate and structure. Currently, the Committee's mandate is limited to femicides committed by partners (husband, boyfriend, ex-husband, ex-boyfriend). Thus, it does not address femicide cases committed by first or second-degree relatives (father, uncle, brother, or son), which are more prevalent among the Palestinian community in Israel. Between 2008 and 2018, only 27 % of the Palestinian victims were murdered by their partners, compared to 40.3 %, who were murdered by a family member (See Box 2).¹⁶ When human rights groups

¹⁵Women's Advancement Committee, "The committee discussion protocol" (2021). Available at https://fs.knesset.gov.il/24/Committees/24_ptv_614769.doc (accessed on 28 January 2022).

¹⁶Batshon, "A comparative research report".

Box 2. Palestinian femicide cases by relationship type

- **7.8% of Palestinian femicide cases** were committed by a **partner/spouse** (29 out of 104 cases).
- **40.3% of Palestinian femicide cases** were committed by a **family member**, including extended family members and the spouse's family (42 out of 104).
- **31.7% of the cases** were committed by **another person(s)**, including in other criminal cases, an unknown perpetrator or a hitman (33 out of 104).

requested the committee expand its mandate,¹⁷ the committee claimed that this could be done only if it gained access to information on victims from the relevant authorities. This argument lacks any logic since there is no causal connection between broadening the Committee's mandate to examine femicide victims cases perpetrated by people other than the victims' partners, and the Committee's access to information.

Source: research on femicide cases, 2008– 2018.¹⁸

2.3. Article 18 – Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion

The family law regime in Israel violates freedom of conscience and freedom from religion. The State allows only religious marriage in its territory. Family law in Israel originates from the millet system introduced by the Ottoman Empire. Under this system, recognized religious communities (Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Druze) are granted autonomy over family law issues. This autonomy is exercised through a system of religious courts pertaining to each

¹⁷ Communications from the Association for Civil Rights in Israel on 9 September 2020 and 15 October 2020; reply from the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Femicide on 8 October 2020; Women's Advancement Committee, "The committee discussion protocol".

¹⁸ Batshon, "A comparative research report".

religious community. Religious courts have exclusive jurisdiction over marriage and divorce in Israel; in other family law matters, such as alimony, child custody, and inheritance religious courts enjoy concurrent jurisdiction. In Israel, Israel established a civil system of family courts with parallel jurisdiction over family law (except for marriage and divorce). Religious courts and civil family courts alike must apply religious laws of the parties to the dispute, except for a few civil laws applicable to certain personal status disputes, such as the Spouses Property Relations Law 5733-1973, the Succession Law of 1965, and the Legal Capacity & Guardianship Law of 1962.

The imposition of religious norms on the individual, without offering a secular alternative constitutes a serious infringement of freedom of conscience. According to General Comment (GC) 28, States should give information on the practices aiming to abolish, restrict or prevent “the marriage of a woman of a particular religion to a man who professes no religion or a different religion.”

2.4. Article 23 – Right to Family

2.4.a. The imposition of discriminatory religion-based laws

As mentioned earlier, marriage and divorce in Israel are governed by the religious laws of the parties. Though each religious community is subject to its religious law, patriarchal conceptions of the marriage institution and gender roles is a common denominator of religious norms applied by all religious communities. In Orthodox Jewish law, a wife cannot divorce her husband without his consent; if he refuses, she might spend the rest of her life married to him against her will.¹⁹ Gender inequities in divorce law exist in the Greek Orthodox Code, which is applied by Orthodox ecclesiastical courts in Israel. This code was last reviewed in the 19th century, and it does not recognize, for example, that physical abuse of the wife by her husband is a legitimate ground for seeking a divorce.²⁰ Divorce is not even an option for Catholic women, they can only seek separation from the husband, or ask for the annulment of the marriage under very narrow circumstances. Alternatively, they have to convert to orthodox christianity to seek a divorce but only if the husband agrees to do the same. For its part, The family law applicable to Muslims in Israel is the Ottoman Law of Family Rights (hereinafter OLFR). The OLFR was introduced by the Ottoman Empire in mandatory Palestine in 1919 and remains in force today.

The OLFR embodies a patriarchal construction of rights and duties within the family. Men are constructed as superior to women, as the heads of the family, and as providers and protectors of women.²¹

The family law regime in Israel is inconsistent with Article 23(4) of the ICCPR, which guarantees gender equality in family relations. Israel entered a reservation to Article 23 of the ICCPR, according to which “matters of personal status are governed in Israel by the religious law of the parties concerned. To the extent that such law is inconsistent with its obligations under the Covenant, Israel reserves the right to apply that law”. Israel entered similar reservations to CEDAW to limit the application of the principle of gender equality to family relations. The CEDAW committee expressed the view that Israel's reservations concerning marital equality are inadmissible since they are contrary to the object and purpose of CEDAW.²²

¹⁹Stopler, G. (2004). The free exercise of discrimination: Religious liberty, civic community and women's equality. *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law*, 10, 459.

²⁰Karayanni, Michael. "Multiculturalism as covering: On the accommodation of minority religions in Israel." *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 66, no. 4 (2018): 831-875.

²¹Rouhana, H. (2006). Muslim family laws in Israel: The role of the state and the citizenship of Palestinian women. *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*, 27, 37–49

²²CEDAW Committee 2011, Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. UN Doc. CEDAW/C/ISR/CO/5.

2.4.b. Policies for eradicating polygamy

Article 23(4) of the ICCPR and article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) impose a duty on States to take the necessary measures to ensure equal rights for spouses entering marriage, during the marriage, and at its dissolution. Still more specifically, the HRC (ICCPR GC 28, para. 24) and CEDAW (art. 16) impose a duty on States to abolish polygamy. Polygamy constitutes a serious violation of the right to marital relations.

Polygamy was criminalized in Israel in 1977 (art. 176 of the Israeli Penal Law 5737-1977). Still, it is practiced in some communities, especially among the Palestinian Bedouin community in

the Naqab region. Between 20 and 40% of Bedouin households in the Naqab area are polygamous.²³

For many years, Israel turned a blind eye to polygamy and showed no interest in enforcing the law.²⁴ Only recently, Israel started to pay attention to this discriminatory practice out of demographic concerns. Former Prime Minister Netanyahu publicly declared that the Bedouin demographic rise in the Naqab, due to polygamy, is a national threat that requires urgent action.²⁵ In January 2017, the Israeli government adopted Resolution 2345, to establish the

²³Administrative Petition, *The Association Women and Girls Against Violence v. Israel Police*, 43903, (Aug. 20, 2020); S. Boulos, "Position Paper: A Critique of Israel's Approach to Polygamy within Palestinian Communities in Israel" (The Working Group for Equality in Personal Status Issues, 2020), p.8. Retrieved from https://www.wavo.org/uploads//releases_pdf/107190186320220131092040983001571.pdf (Last accessed 31 January 2022).

²⁴Inter-Ministerial Committee Dealing for the Negative Implications of Polygamy, "Final report" (in Hebrew) (2018), pp. 7, 16. Available at https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/generalpage/polygamy_final_report/he/polygamy_final_report.pdf (accessed 28 January 2022).

²⁵Z. Kam, "Netanyahu: "The Bedouin rise is a national issue", *Kan* (in Hebrew), 20 June 2017. Available at <https://www.kan.org.il/item/?itemid=19861> (accessed 28 January 2022).

Inter-Ministerial Committee for Dealing with the Negative Implications of Polygamy, headed by the former Director-General of the Ministry of Justice, Emi Palmor (hereafter the Palmor Committee). While the Palmor Committee adopted pivotal recommendations for eradicating in the field of law enforcement, employment, education, health and social services, it did not abandon the demographic/security approach to tackling polygamy. Additionally, it lacked an intersectional approach to this discriminatory practice. This is reflected in the following:

- The scope of the Palmor Committee's mandate is limited to the Bedouin women in Naqab, where polygamy is perceived as a "demographic" threat, excluding the other sections of the population where polygamy is less common.
- The Palmor Committee overlooked Israel's decades-long discriminatory land policies in the Naqab and their correlation to Polygamy. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, land-grabbing policies have led to the forced displacement of Bedouins from their lands. This has had an adverse impact on the status of Bedouin women within their communities. Historically, Bedouin women worked in agriculture; with the loss

of their land, they lost their productive power. This has resulted in the erosion of their power and status within their community.²⁶ The gendered implications of discriminatory land policies remain particularly evident in the Naqab today, especially in the unrecognized villages whose inhabitants are denied access to basic services and basic human rights, such as housing, water, health, and education.²⁷ Still, **the Palmor Committee attributed polygamy only to internal cultural and religious factors while ignoring the correlation between discriminatory land policies and high rates of polygamous marriages.**

- the Lack of recognition of the correlation between discriminatory land policies and polygamy is evident in the recommendation of the Palmor Committee concerning

²⁶ Abu Rabia, R. (2011), Redefining polygamy among the Palestinian Bedouins in Israel: Colonization, patriarchy, and resistance. *Am. UJ Gender Soc. Pol'y & L.* , 19, 459.

²⁷ Abu Rabia, R. (2011), Principles for Arranging Recognition of Bedouin Villages in the Negev. *The Association for Civil Rights in Israel.*

unrecognized villages. The Palmor Committee established that polygamy rates among younger men living in unrecognized villages are higher than those in the recognized villages. Still, in its recommendations, it did not challenge the status quo of the unrecognized villages, nor did it call for their recognition. The report did not call for the establishment of **permanent** health facilities and social services in unrecognized villages to empower women. Instead, it only required expanding mobile services, such as mobile clinics, to those villages.²⁸

- The Committee's recommendations fail to address the plight of alien women from Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza, who are trapped in polygamous marriages to Israeli citizens. The Ministry of Interior refuses to grant these women legal status or family unification, even if the alien wife is the first wife. These women are deprived of the right to access health or other social services. As a result, they are more susceptible to physical and emotional abuse by their husbands. Fear of expulsion prevents these women from seeking the authorities' help even in cases of grave abuse. While the Palmor Committee compares the situation of these women to the situation of trafficked women, it does not require the State to grant them legal status.
- The Palmor Committee recommended the legalization of polygamy in the following cases: when the first wife cannot bear children; when the first wife is seriously ill; when a man marries the widow of his brother; and when the husband has been separated from his wife for a long time but the divorce procedures are complex or could cause serious harm to the first wife and her children. Eventually, the government did not implement the Committee's proposal to regulate polygamy due to public outcry and strong opposition by feminist groups. Demographic concerns played a role too in the rejection of this specific recommendation.²⁹ However, this indicates that at the policy-making level, women's rights are not the central factor prompting the state to take actions to eradicate polygamy.

These deficiencies suggest that the measures adopted by the State to eradicate polygamy are motivated primarily by discriminatory demographical considerations and not by the protection of the human rights of the victims.

²⁸Boulos, "Position paper"; Inter-Ministerial Committee Dealing for the Negative Implications of Polygamy, "Final report"

²⁹Boulos, "Position paper".

ANNEX

Shadow Report on ICCPR

(Joint submission)

The Organizations Submitting this Shadow Report:

Women Against Violence (WAVO)

WAVO is an indigenous, women-led, women-run NGO and one of Israel's leading Arab women's organizations. Having gotten its start at the vanguard of the NGO feminist movement of the early 1990s, the Association began by founding the first services for Arab women victims of violence in Israel (and, in fact, the entire Middle East).

WAVO established the first shelter for battered women and their children (1992), a 24-hour crisis center for Arabic speakers (1993), a shelter for young women (1994), and a series of halfway houses (1995-8), all of which are formally recognized and funded by the Ministry of Welfare. In the intervening years, the Association has continued to run several of these services (notably its women's shelter and crisis center), defining *new roles* for itself in the early 2000s as an all-around feminist agency to raise the status of Arab women in Israel. With this, the organization adopted a three-tiered platform combining public awareness campaigning to change attitudes across the Arab minority with two campaigns: one to promote women's participation in the workforce and another to promote their participation in the public sphere (especially in the decision-making echelons).

In 2021, some 15,000 women and youth participated in the Association's public events in schools and communities across the country. Between 2008-11 the Association signed all 9 of the major Arab political parties in Israel on an 'Equality Pact' that commits them to promote an equal number of women on their candidate lists; today, it continues this work at the local level, and aims to sign all 53 of the Arab local and regional councils in Israel. (It has signed 20 so far.) Outside of the Arab minority, the Association is recognized both nationally and across the wider MENA region (among others by the U.S. State Department, which have been a supporter since 2013) for its expertise in violence prevention services, advocacy and public awareness campaigning. The Association is a founding member of the SALMA Network, a coalition of 12 women's organizations from countries across the Middle East and North Africa, where it assists grassroots and emergent NGOs in these countries with everything from formulating feminist platforms to developing service strategies to address the problem of gender-based violence.

Al-Tufula, Nazareth Nursery Institution (NNI)

NNI was established in 1989 by Palestinian women citizens of Israel. Since its establishment, the NNI has worked in two main fields, Early Childhood Care and Development and Women Empowerment, to encourage a democratic and civil society. The working strategies of the Al-Tufula center include the development of Infrastructure, Capacity Building, Resource Development, Support services, Advocacy, and Networking.

In the field of Women Empowerment, our activities are centered on women's unique attributes and abilities. By creating opportunities and serving as a support system, we aim to fulfill our primary goal, to empower women to use their qualities as their endeavor to develop and try new things and enter into contemporary and historic roles in a very traditional society

NNI has been developing a new approach of empowerment that originated from the current situation, culture and beliefs of women in our society. We start with the individual women, where they are at, without marking their steps or deciding their path of empowerment and without assuming that they lack or need certain skills. We believe that empowerment is about believing in women's abilities and creating opportunities for them to use their abilities within their society.

Kayan, A Feminist Organization

Kayan takes a bottom-up approach to social change. We invest in the field by empowering women to become transformative leaders on local and national levels, protecting and promoting Palestinian women's human and civil rights in Israel, and breaking down the social and institutional barriers to gender equality. We do this through two interconnected programs: the Community and Legal Programs.

Kayan's Community Work mobilizes women to challenge gender discrimination at family, community and society levels and actively participate in public life and decision-making processes through long-term investments in developing Arab women's leadership at the grassroots. Support of women-led community organizing in Arab villages has emerged as a cornerstone of Kayan's work, a tool that empowers women to overcome imbalances and improve their lives in tangible ways. We strengthen civil society institution-building among Palestinian women with intensive empowerment and leadership training, ongoing professional development support, and access to inter-organizational networking and collaboration frameworks. Kayan currently has community projects that address violence against women, gender-sensitive budgeting, women's health, land and housing rights, the rights of return, and women in local politics.

Kayan's Legal Work serves Palestinian women in Israel through investigating institutionalized barriers to women's rights; empowering Arab women as informed decision-makers able to demand their rights; litigating in defense of women's human and civil rights; and advocating for social, political, economic, and legal reforms that advance Palestinian women's status and rights. Legal work activities include:

- providing free legal consultation and representation to Palestinian women in Israel;
- initiating advocacy campaigns that target key political and religious institutions;
- informing grassroots women of their legal rights;
- supporting local feminist initiatives with legal tools;
- educating employers and duty-bearers of their legal obligations as related to Palestinian women's rights, and;
- enforcing the realization of Palestinian women's rights in specific institutions and throughout the society at large.

The Working Group for Equality in Personal Status Issues (The Working Group)

The Working Group is a coalition of leading human rights and feminist NGOs promoting the rights of Palestinian women in Israel. The Working Group aims at guaranteeing the principle of gender equality in family law in Israel. The Working Group works in 5 key areas:

- (1) changing legislation and challenging institutional regulations to enable Palestinian women to access secular liberties;
- (2) reforming the religious courts to ensure that they are equitable and accessible to the needs of women;
- (3) training service providers and working to reform institutional services for these women;
- (4) raising awareness and designing social campaigns on discriminatory practices, such as polygamy and underage marriage; and
- (5) researching discriminatory practices in the realm of family law to suggest appropriate remedies.

