

Protection of Women's Rights in the Escalating Conflict in Palestine

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Abstract

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is inextricably linked to the issues Palestinian women face. They have been affected psychologically, mentally, and physically. The Palestinian independence movement and Palestinian women's struggle are inextricably linked. The protection of women's rights has grown in importance in light of the protracted conflict in Palestine. Conflict-related tensions and economic pressures are contributing to an increase in domestic violence. In conflict areas, fundamental rights like freedom of speech, travel, and political participation are often ignored or restricted. This study investigates how both governmental and non-governmental entities safeguard women's rights in Palestine. This qualitative case study-based research examines how women's rights were maintained in Palestine as the conflict escalated. This study examines the dynamics of women's rights issues in Palestine and the difficulties in addressing these issues in-depth using secondary data from earlier studies, journal articles, and online articles. The study concludes that a multifaceted approach is necessary to protect women's rights in Palestine, given the Israeli occupation and patriarchal norms. Cooperation is required to defend women's rights and promote a more equitable society in Palestine.

INTRODUCTION

The prolonged Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), which lasted more than 56 years, the 16-year siege of Gaza, and the ongoing confrontations between Israeli security forces and Palestinian armed organizations have historically been the main causes of humanitarian needs in the region. The year 2023 has seen an increase in political unpredictability, bloodshed, and the severity of the humanitarian catastrophe. Before October 7, 2023, the Humanitarian Country Team projected that roughly 2.1 million Palestinians living in the OPT would need humanitarian aid; of these, 49.2% are women (24% are under the age of 18, 23.7% are between the ages of 18 and 65, and 1.5% are over 65) (UN Women Palestina, 2024). It is essential to understand the background of this conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long historical roots, dating back to the mid-20th century. The foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 sparked a military war with Arab governments and resulted in the wholesale deportation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, who are today known as Palestinian refugees. The conflict has continued with various periods of escalation and ceasefires, including the Six-Day War in 1967 and the first Intifada in 1987. About 1,200 Palestinians were killed and Israeli soldiers and civilians were taken prisoner during an onslaught against Israel on October 7 by Hamas and other Palestinian armed organizations operating out of Gaza. Following the imposition of a "state of war alert," Israeli troops began targeting targets in the Gaza Strip. On October 9th, the Israeli government declared a "total siege" on Gaza, cutting off petroleum, water, and electricity supplies and banning foreigners from accessing the enclave. On December 1st, a seven-day humanitarian truce came to an end, during which Hamas released several hostages and increased humanitarian aid to Gaza. Since there is still hostility in Israel and Gaza, significant humanitarian initiatives are "nearly impossible," and there has been an increase in violence in the West Bank (UN Women Palestina, 2024).

In the context of the protracted conflict in Palestine, the protection of women's rights has become an increasingly urgent issue. The long history of conflict between Israel and Palestine has caused untold suffering, with women being one of the groups most vulnerable to its effects. The current intensification of the conflict, particularly the fighting between Israel and Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip, has aggravated the situation. Women are frequently direct victims of physical, sexual, and psychological violence during conflict, and their access to health and education services is severely limited. Women have special problems when conflict dynamics persist. They are frequently the direct targets of physical violence, such as airstrikes and rocket attacks on occupied regions.

Furthermore, there is an increased danger of sexual violence during combat scenarios, with data indicating that military and armed organizations conduct high rates of sexual harassment and rape. Not only that but women's access to health and education services suffered severely throughout the conflict. Health facilities and schools were frequently targeted for attacks, causing increased health risks for women and children. Access to reproductive health services has also become complex, with limited mobility and damaged facilities. In addition, gender violence has also become an issue of growing concern (Aghabekian, 2017).

Domestic violence is increasing due to economic pressures and tensions caused by conflict. Women often have nowhere to escape for protection, especially in areas isolated and marginalized by conflict (Keith, 2022b). In addition to structural gender inequality, such as the law in Palestine that assumes women are under the protection and supervision of men, women in Gaza suffer unique challenges and vulnerabilities. All Gazans faced a crisis of safety because of the escalation, but the demands of protection for single women, female heads of families, teenage girls, women with disabilities, and older women were particularly increased. Girls and women are denied privacy in overcrowded shelters. Extremely limited access to food and water has serious consequences, especially for young and nursing mothers. Women and girls lack access to acceptable and safe latrines and bathing facilities. Women's and girls' menstruation hygiene is weak. Women and girls must have access to clean, safe, gender-segregated water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, food, water, safe shelter, health care (including contraception and sexual and reproductive health), and psychosocial support. Access to basic non-food necessities including winter clothing, sanitary pads, dignity kits, and assistive technology should be provided. Gender-sensitive humanitarian relief must reach the most vulnerable women, including head-of-household women, single women, expecting moms, disabled women, women with long-term diseases, and older women (UN Women Palestina, 2024).

The violence has not stopped outside of Gaza. 2023 was already proving to be one of the worst years on the West Bank since the Second Intifada as of October 7th. Most concerningly, Palestinian buildings in the West Bank were demolished (UN Women Palestina, 2024). The long-running conflict has also hurt women's rights. Fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression, movement, and political involvement, are frequently overlooked or curtailed in conflict zones. Women involved in peace and reconciliation efforts usually face threats and intimidation, limiting the space for them to play an active role in peace processes.

The problems faced by Palestinian women cannot be separated from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the 1967 war, the conflict has been ongoing since the early 20th century. Women face many problems in this conflict, including physical violence, psychological trauma, discrimination in education, economic insecurity, and sexual violence. Palestinian women have gone through a lot to face this crisis. They have experienced physical, psychosocial, and mental impacts. Women's conditions are also becoming increasingly marginalized, as evidenced by their underrepresentation in leadership, peace processes, and politics. Furthermore, women's lack of awareness of their rights and services has contributed to their increasingly marginalized position (Keith, 2022b).

Palestinian women's struggle for independence cannot be separated from the movement to achieve Palestinian independence. The national movement allowed Palestinian women to enter the

public sphere more easily. Palestinian women's rights have been greatly affected by the long-running conflict between Israel and Palestine. With the conflict, there have been several forms of violence that are considered a form of mistreatment against women. Palestinian women made several efforts to respond to Israel's actions.

The form of women's participation here can be seen from the involvement of Palestinian women in various activities, including taking to the streets to organize strikes and demonstrations, sometimes even involving confrontation, taking part in local committees, boycotting Israeli products, refusing to pay taxes, and so on. In addition to these roles, women participate as coordinators in solving problems arising from the conflict, such as boycotting staples and setting up mobile clinics that provide social services, such as alternative schools for children. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, women play an important role in achieving peace. Palestinian women think that once Palestine is free of Israeli authority, they will be able to reclaim their rights, which have been neglected for many years. So, in this circumstance, in a severely marginalized situation, women will seek for gender equality (Lasut et al., 2022).

Veronese, et al. highlight the unique role of women in conflict, where they tend to bear different burdens than men, including health, security, and childcare. Palestinian women in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are exposed to a high risk of trauma, social marginalization, discrimination, and political oppression, driving them to coordinate demonstrations and protests to fight for their and their families' rights. This has given rise to the phenomenon of resilience, wherein Palestinian women, especially mothers who care for children under conflict, are celebrated as the "mothers of martyrs", signifying a symbol of persistent resistance and tenacity in addressing the obstacles they encounter.

On the other hand, Griffiths and Repo shed light on the disparate treatment of Palestinian women compared to men when navigating checkpoints in the Israeli-Palestinian region. Checkpoints like Huwara, Qalandia, and Checkpoint 300 require permits for Palestinians to cross the border, often involving interrogation and potential confiscation of items considered suspicious. This ordeal presents an unwelcome experience for Palestinian women, who frequently encounter challenges in securing permits unless for medical or religious purposes which are not consistently granted. This proves particularly disadvantageous for pregnant women or those in need of urgent medical attention.

Moreover, these restrictions impede other activities, such as visiting family or fulfilling familial needs that may only be accessible in Israeli territory, notwithstanding Palestinian women's contributions to the family by provisioning food and other essentials.

Ikromah, et al. (2024) explain that international humanitarian law strictly prohibits the use of children and women as objects of attack and violence in war. This is expressly addressed in Geneva Convention IV, which governs civilian protection during times of war. Women and children are vulnerable and demand special protection. The UN General Assembly declared in 1974 that all forms of oppression and cruel treatment during emergencies and war are considered war crimes. Women and children play a major role in the resilience of the world and the birth of future generations. International humanitarian law also prohibits the destruction of neutral objects and prohibits the bombing of cities, villages, and residential areas.

According to Rachmawati et al., Palestinian women's resistance is part of the fight for independence and an end to the long-running war. Palestinian women fight the Israeli occupation in two ways: direct and indirect. Palestinian women engage in direct opposition through combat and politics. Indirect resistance is carried out by educating youngsters about the values of the Islamic struggle (Rachmawati et al., 2022). Palestinian women are also involved in non-violent resistance against Israel. They initiated and joined the construction of educational facilities, created alternative economies, and provided humanitarian assistance, such as food, water, housing, and clothing for families who experienced injustice during the Israeli occupation. Women's empowerment activities together with UNDP (United National Development Program) carried out by Palestinian women aim to provide social services and mobilize women to engage in political activities.

From the results of the research above, it is shown that the struggle of women in Palestine is very difficult. The main problems faced by Palestinian women cannot be separated from the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. Since the beginning of the 20th century, this conflict has caused a variety of problems for women, including physical violence, psychological trauma, discrimination in education, economic insecurity, and sexual violence. Palestinian women have been significantly impacted by the conflict, both physically and mentally, with them increasingly marginalized in society. Women have demonstrated tenacity and fortitude in advocating for their rights and resolving the ongoing issue. Despite this, they encounter challenges in obtaining health care, education, and daily life, like as passing past Israeli checkpoints.

According to extant research, women play a significant role in achieving long-term peace and justice in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, there is still a lack of understanding of the unique issues Palestinian women confront and the necessary tools to address them effectively. More research is needed to identify effective ways for the government and non-governmental groups to safeguard Palestinian women, with assistance from all stakeholders.

To get protection and attention to the problems that women encounter in Palestine, there needs to be assistance from various parties. This study aims to investigate how governmental and non-governmental entities safeguard women's rights in Palestine.

METHOD

The research on the protection of women's rights during the escalation of the war in Palestine is qualitative and takes the form of a case study. An in-depth examination of the state of women's rights in Palestine serves as the foundation for further investigation into the form of gender-equitable protection for women in Palestine. By using secondary data from previous research, journal articles, and internet articles, this research explores in depth the dynamics of women's rights issues in Palestine and the challenges faced in addressing women's rights issues.

The data obtained from various sources is then reduced according to the data needs of the research. The data that has been reduced is then displayed descriptively and visualized in graphic form. Furthermore, data analysis occurs at the same time as data gathering. The processes performed in this data analysis conform to Miles et al (2014). In a qualitative approach, data analysis is carried out in various stages: data reduction, data display, conclusion drafting, and validation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Women's rights are still important in the Palestinian conflict, but they are frequently overlooked. Understanding the Dynamics of Women's Rights Issues in the Palestinian Conflict is critical for comprehending the complexity confronting Palestinian women. Despite adversity, women play critical roles in ensuring long-term peace and justice.

However, their protection requires collaborative efforts from both governmental and non-governmental players. The efforts of government and non-governmental actors to protect women's rights in Palestine are critical in tackling the unique obstacles that women face. While governments develop policy frameworks, non-governmental groups give grassroots support and advocacy. Nonetheless, barriers to protecting women's rights in Palestine remain due to established patriarchal practices and the intricacies of the war. Legal, societal, and economic barriers impede women's empowerment and access to justice, highlighting the need for comprehensive solutions.

Dynamics of Women's Rights Issues in the Palestinian Conflict

Politically and historically, the struggle between Israel and Palestine has been ongoing since Israel's founding in 1948. The occupation of Palestine is an issue related to Western-backed Zionist campaigns, as well as the discursive practices of Zionism and Orientalism. Intellectuality, considered a sign of Western superiority, is widely associated with orientalism. In response to this, Palestinian women are significantly involved in political protests Israeli occupation, and oppression that cause death and impede the survival of their children under war conditions. Palestinian women cannot fulfill

gender roles that could create justice between women and men. For example, during the May 2021 crisis, women were not only victims of Israeli airstrikes, but they also lost their homes and families. The conditions of war that occur have a tremendous impact on women as victims of war and experience the pressures that surround women during the war (Arifuddin, 2021).

Palestinian history has had a significant impact on Palestinian women's political participation. Men hold a strong position in Palestinian politics, as they do in other Arab countries and around the world. Although representation and voice for Palestinian women are gradually improving, there is still room for improvement. This is evident in the low number of women in politics, general decision-making, and policy. Reflecting on this situation, over the years, there have been commitments and efforts to improve Palestinian women's involvement in sociopolitical concerns. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has reduced women's opportunities at all levels. Since 1967, more than 15,000 women have been arrested and subjected to interrogation, among other abuses of their rights (Aghabekian, 2019).

Hillstead sees that women in Palestine are often not involved in formal politics, especially in higher government positions. Due to the patriarchal structure of the Palestinian Authority, the status of women in Palestinian governing bodies has evolved little (Hillstead, 2023).

Data on the percentage distribution of women and men involved in formal politics, such as positions in government in Palestine, can be seen in Figure 1. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage distribution of women and men in the positions of the national council, central council, governors, cabinet members, ambassadors, and working in missions abroad, including diplomats and administrators, in 2020 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021). In Figure 1, women's involvement is still very small compared to men.

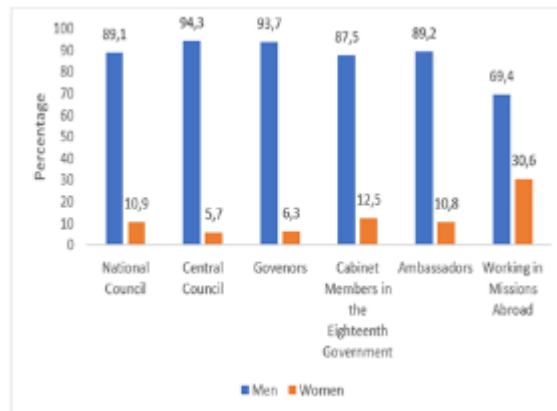


Figure 1

Percentage Distribution of Women and Men in Government Positions in Palestine, 2020
 (Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics, 2021)

Women living in Gaza face vulnerabilities due to both the conflict and structural gender discrimination, such as Palestinian laws that place women under the protection and guardianship of men. This has led to a protection crisis for everyone in Gaza. This is illustrated by the increasing need for security, especially for single women, heads of households, adolescents, women with disabilities, and older women. Even under conditions of conflict, existing shelters are overcrowded and do not provide privacy for women and girls. Limited access to water and very limited food endangers nursing mothers and children. Women and girls must have access to safe shelter, food, water, and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services and sex-segregated psycho-social support. Women, especially women as heads of households, single, pregnant, people with disabilities, those with chronic illnesses, and the elderly, require gender-responsive humanitarian assistance (UN Women Palestina, 2024).

The position of women in Palestine is inseparable from the legal foundations that exist in Palestine. The citizenship rights of Palestinian men and women are not the same. This can be seen from the Palestinian Citizenship Orders of 1925 and 1941, which were enacted during the British Mandate Era. Only men, not women, could pass on their citizenship to their spouses or children. In addition, if a woman marries someone who is not of Palestinian origin, she loses her citizenship unless she submits a written application to the Minister of Interior and National Security within one year of the marriage. These conditions show that women are often considered second-class by the public. This results in the position of women who have less access to information and even to be involved in public forums. The conflict conditions that occur worsen the position of women; the conflict that occurred in Palestine resulted in the loss of opportunities for women to gain access to education. Even the war itself had an impact on the mental and psychological health of women who were under pressure during the fight (Rought-Brooks, 2015).

During the armed conflict between Palestine and Israel, some conditions further weakened the position of women. Political security constraints, political turmoil, weak law enforcement, and limits on Palestinians' freedom of movement have resulted in the marginalization of women. This condition results in women's civil and political rights being threatened. This position becomes difficult because women must prioritize national objectives over personal interests.

Furthermore, Palestinian women's rights advocates have been unable to conduct broad advocacy for legal protection. The lack of security and enforcement of laws, especially regarding domestic violence and violence against women, is increasing in other conflict areas. Women face challenges when traveling to school and hospitals and managing time between household duties and work. The poverty that pervades socio-economic conditions during conflict has limited women's opportunities for education because of the conflict. This has a further impact on the slightly lower female literacy rate in Palestine (Babst & Tellier, 2012).

Palestinian women have faced diverse and systemic forms of discrimination and brutality as a result of the Israeli occupation and their powerlessness to control their destiny. Thousands have been victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ongoing genocide, therefore the assault on Palestinian women's dignity and rights has taken new dimensions (Reem Alsalem, 2023). The impact of the conflict is viewed as a violation of human rights to life. In crises, it is clear that women's rights have been neglected.

Many women's organizations focusing on education and social services have participated in peace and unofficial dispute settlement efforts. The majority of these are women's peace and human rights organizations. Few women are officially involved in negotiations to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The majority of these are women's peace and human rights organizations. Few women are officially involved in negotiations to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This limitation to being involved in the peace negotiation process continues their efforts to be able to influence the outcome of the negotiations from a woman's perspective. This is certainly not easy because Palestinian women must face domestic challenges to be selected as a team of negotiators in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Aghabekian, 2017).

Women in Palestine face threats and vulnerabilities that are integral to the ongoing rights violations and humanitarian crisis affecting all parties in Palestine. Due to Israeli policies, violence against Palestinians continues during the Israeli occupation, and Palestinian women's rights will remain marginalized. During the conflict, women and girls took on different roles in the conflict. These roles, for example, served as a response to violence and insecurity during the conflict. Women were not only responsible for household maintenance, but they were also responsible for feeding the family and providing entertainment to the children. In this technique, the focus of the role played by women is to play with children and create a comfortable environment despite challenging circumstances. Therefore, the role performed can at least create a conducive environment for children during conflict (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia., 2022).

The description above shows that women's rights in Palestine are faced with complicated conditions in terms of opportunities at the domestic level to conflict conditions that put a lot of

pressure on women in many aspects. Structurally, the position of women who still need to get equality in various positions in government is a challenge for the Palestinian government. Conflict conditions have impacted women's limited access to socioeconomic and political components. In response to this condition, Palestinian women have tried to carry out several forms of struggle, including the effort to be involved in the peace process.

The Efforts of Government and Non-government Actors in Protecting Women's Rights in Palestine

The protection of the rights of women in Palestine has various problems, particularly given the continuous conflict with Israel. Furthermore, the prevalent patriarchal culture in the Middle East, along with early marriages, exacerbates the plight of Palestinian women. According to Palestinian legislation, the minimum legal marriage age in the West Bank is 15 for women and 16 for males, while in the Gaza Strip it is 17 for women and 18 for men. In addition to enduring oppression from the conflict, Palestinian women are also vulnerable to domestic violence. According to a 2011 survey, 37% of currently or formerly married women had experienced violence from their spouses, with psychological abuse accounting for the highest proportion (58.6%), followed by physical violence (23.5%) and sexual assault (11.5%) (Aghabekian, 2017).

Furthermore, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2015, literacy rate among Palestinian women was the highest in the Middle East, reaching 94.4% (Aghabekian, 2017). Aghabekian also highlights the male-dominated political landscape in the Middle East, including in Palestine. Palestinian women seldom hold strategic positions within the government and are often excluded from the policy and decision-making processes. They encounter difficulties in making their voices heard by leaders in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Instead of pushing for women's responsibilities in Palestine, the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords disadvantaged women even further, because the system was inherently dominated by men. Consequently, policies were tailored to men's interests, and the division of political party constituencies did not encourage significant female participation (Aghabekian, 2019).

In response to the issues that women face during conflicts, the United Nations (UN) published the UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 in 2000. This resolution underlines the importance of women's involvement in decision-making, peace initiatives, and conflict resolution. It also recognizes the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women, emphasizing the essential role they may and should play in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction (Initiative on Quiet Diplomacy, 2010). To implement UNSCR 1325, countries can adopt its principles through National Action Plans (NAPs). Since August 2019, 82 countries have created their NAPs. These programs represent a state's commitment to advancing the concerns of women, peace, and security (WPS) (Hamilton et al., 2020).

Palestine, under the aegis of the Ministry of Women, has been one of the countries adopting NAPs based on UNSCR 1325 since 2017. These NAPs in Palestine are responsive to evolving priorities, including the imperative to incorporate interventions focusing on women and girls in the Jordan Valley and other areas affected by Israel's annexation. Additionally, they aim to enhance Palestinian women's involvement in local and international decision-making, as well as COVID-19 rehabilitation efforts. Palestine has demonstrated its commitment through policy, planning, and monitoring frameworks at both national and inter-ministerial levels. In addition, initiatives are underway to strengthen the ability of service providers to address situations of violence against women, involving multiple ministries such as the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Social Development (PeaceWomen, n.d.).

The Palestinian government's steps in adopting NAPs referencing UNSCR 1325 are deemed significant for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Palestine, such as The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH). This is because the violence experienced by women in Palestine emanates from two sources, namely the Israeli occupation and patriarchal culture. MIFTAH views UNSCR 1325 as a tool that can facilitate national

liberation and foster equitable peace for women. Furthermore, according to gender expert Jamilah Abu-Duhou from UN Women, a country in its formation must determine the type of state system it wishes to adopt, whether democratic, liberal, or otherwise. The ideology formed should inherently encompass human rights and uphold women's rights to ensure the fulfillment of human rights conducive to a government system oriented towards societal welfare (Rayman et al., 2016).

On the contrary, Vanessa Farr observed that while UNSCR 1325 had some impact on women's NGOs in Palestine, the ongoing conflict with Israel hindered the resolution from yielding significant results. Many Palestinians, particularly women, have lost faith in the UN's ability to bring about peace due to its perceived lack of support for Palestine (Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011). This sentiment was echoed by Eileen Kuttab, a researcher from the Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University, who noted that the situation in Palestine is far from ideal. Palestine is neither in a state of conflict nor post-conflict but is amidst a national liberation movement that often sidelines women's rights, rendering UNSCR 1325 less relevant. People in Palestine are primarily concerned with securing economic rights, such as meeting daily needs and having adequate housing, thus relegating the fulfillment of women's rights to a secondary priority. Consequently, addressing the root cause of the issue, namely the conflict with Israel, is imperative before tackling the issue of women's rights in Palestine (Rayman et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, women activists in Palestine demonstrate remarkable enthusiasm in advocating for increased representation and influence in politics and decision-making at higher levels, as well as in fostering peace within and beyond their region. Their efforts aim to enhance women's participation and influence in ending the occupation, state-building, and ensuring that their experiences, priorities, and proposed solutions contribute to the stability and sustainability of peace and security. Their objective is to address the occupation and internal divisions, redirecting focus towards domestic issues, such as gender freedom and equality, combating violence against women, and empowering women to contribute meaningfully.

Despite facing numerous obstacles, such as the conflict with Israel and a male-dominated political system, these women activists persist in their efforts to amplify women's participation in Palestine. Nonetheless, meaningful change can only be achieved through the collective participation of all stakeholders, including government entities, NGOs, and the community at large (Aghabekian, 2019).

Challenges to Protecting Women's Rights in Palestine

In the Palestinian context, protecting women's rights is a daunting task influenced by a slew of conflicting variables. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict casts a long shadow, exacerbating existing disparities and introducing new hurdles to women's rights. Under the weight of occupation, Palestinian women endure fragmented territory and jurisdictional challenges that impede the provision of essential services and increase vulnerabilities. Furthermore, established social norms and discriminatory judicial systems exacerbate gender disparities, limiting women's access to justice and perpetuating cycles of violence and discrimination.

Women's underrepresentation in leadership positions and political processes further marginalizes their voices and limits their ability to advocate for their rights. Furthermore, insufficient understanding among women about their rights and accessible services, combined with limited access to these resources, create significant barriers to seeking help and protection. Addressing these multiple difficulties necessitates a comprehensive approach that targets the core causes of injustice, promotes gender equality, and protects and empowers Palestinian women in all aspects of life (Rachmawati et al., 2022).

The following are some of the most critical concerns concerning gender equality and women's empowerment, according to UN Women, a UN organization. The following are some of the factors that contribute to violence against women: The disparate allocation of resources and authority between men and women, discriminatory legal systems that violate women's property rights, social norms, and behaviors that adhere to men's superiority over women and degrade women's positions

and roles, obsolete and repressive legislation that prevent women from accessing justice by perpetuating stereotypes about men and women and denying them a chance to reside free from violence and with dignity (Keith, 2022b);

The Israeli occupation of Palestine results in the following: (1) Land fragmentation and the State of Palestine's lack of legal authority make it hard for the government to deliver services to women and the general population; (2) Women are underrepresented in leadership positions, political engagement, and the peace process.; (3) Women have low levels of understanding of their rights and accessible resources, as well as limited access to such services; and (4) Prolonged protection and humanitarian crises as a result of Israel's long-term occupation (Keith, 2022a).

Palestinian women, like all Palestinians, face multiple challenging contexts that impact their lives profoundly. First, they confront the colonial setting, facing daily hardships, such as arrests, deportations, killings, and house demolitions, all of which are part of an ethnic cleansing campaign. This persistent harassment not only jeopardizes their lives but also shatters the social fabric of Palestinian families.

Secondly, poverty and economic decline intensify their situation, as economic reliance limits work opportunities and control over critical resources such as water. Furthermore, restrictions on mobility and trade limit their access to necessities, disproportionately harming female-headed households (WILPF, 2021).

Thirdly, the rise of obscurantist and conservative forces, bolstered by the occupation, poses another significant challenge. These forces impede the implementation of laws that promote gender equality and social justice, hindering progress towards a more equitable society for Palestinian women. The uneven distribution of power and resources between men and women creates an environment in which women are commonly marginalized and disempowered, rendering them vulnerable to different types of violence. Fourth, prejudiced judicial systems exacerbate the situation by violating women's property rights and limiting their ability to seek justice and protection under the law. These legislative frameworks reinforce harmful gender stereotypes while denying women the right to a life free of violence and discrimination. It silences their voices and limits their ability to speak up for their rights and interests. This lack of representation exacerbates structural inequalities and stymies efforts to solve Palestinian women's specific challenges. Furthermore, social norms and acts that support men's superiority over women while decreasing women's status and roles contribute significantly to the perpetuation of violence against women. These social ideas normalize gender-based violence, making it difficult for women to assert their rights and seek assistance. Outdated and discriminatory laws compound the problem by denying women access to justice and perpetuating structural inequalities. By addressing these core causes and advocating for gender equality, societies can work to establish safer environments in which women can live free of violence and discrimination.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation of Palestine exacerbates Palestinian women's problems, creating a myriad of issues that keep them vulnerable and disenfranchised. For starters, territorial fragmentation and the State of Palestine's lack of legal jurisdiction in Palestine make it impossible for the government to provide key services and ensure the protection of women and the general population.

This lack of governance exacerbates existing inequities, making women especially vulnerable to various forms of abuse and exploitation. Furthermore, women's underrepresentation in leadership roles, political engagement, and the peace process undermines their voices and inhibits their ability to advocate for their rights and interests (WILPF, 2021). This lack of representation reinforces structural inequality and impedes efforts to address Palestinian women's unique issues. Furthermore, poor levels of awareness among women about their rights and accessible resources, along with limited access to these services, present significant barriers to women seeking support and protection.

Finally, the extended protection and humanitarian crises caused by Israel's occupation exacerbate the obstacles that Palestinian women face, increasing their vulnerability and reinforcing cycles of violence and instability. Addressing these diverse difficulties necessitates concerted efforts

to address the core causes of inequality and injustice, promote gender equality, and protect and empower Palestinian women (Keith, 2022b).

Conclusion

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, entrenched since Israel's establishment in 1948, intertwines with issues of Western-backed Zionism and Orientalism, constraining Palestinian women's political agency. Despite strong participation in protests against Israeli occupation, gender inequities continue to limit women's political growth. Gender discrimination, along with conflict-induced insecurity and inadequate access to vital services, further exacerbates vulnerabilities.

Legal disparities further marginalize women, limiting their civic involvement. Women's organizations strive for peace despite facing hurdles, although formal participation in negotiations remains elusive. Despite adversity, Palestinian women maintain perseverance in their roles during conflict. To empower Palestinian women and advance gender equality in the context of war, fundamental hurdles must be addressed.

Palestinian women face multiple challenges in gaining rights and representation, including conflict with Israel and patriarchal standards. Despite progress in literacy and legislative reforms, domestic violence remains prevalent, exacerbated by weak political power. UNSCR 1325 encourages women's participation in peace processes and national planning, providing a source of hope. Palestine's adoption of National Action Plans demonstrates a commitment to empowering women in the face of adversity. Despite efforts to promote gender equality, problems exist due to ongoing conflict. Nonetheless, tireless activism demonstrates a steadfast desire for justice and inclusivity. To achieve long-term peace and prosperity, it's crucial to work together, bridge gaps, and prioritize women's voices.

Protecting women's rights in Palestine, amidst Israeli occupation and patriarchal standards, requires a diverse strategy. The conflict worsens existing inequality, limiting access to services and fueling violence. Women's underrepresentation in leadership perpetuates their marginalization and hinders advocacy efforts. Women face barriers to seeking help due to a lack of awareness and limited resources. Addressing these difficulties requires addressing core causes, promoting gender equality, and empowering women. The Israeli occupation worsens vulnerabilities, restricts governance, and exacerbates injustices. Collective action is necessary to protect women's rights and promote a fairer society in Palestine.

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