



Al-Maqdese for Society Development (MSD)

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«Promotion of peace opportunities through ending exploitation against women's rights in East Jerusalem-gender equality»



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Human Rights at First

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Introduction:

In the light of the regular and continuous Israeli violations against Palestinians in Jerusalem, and because of the aggressive practices by the Israeli authorities, Al-Maqdese works through its projects and programs on raising the awareness of Palestinian citizens in Jerusalem about their rights. Moreover, it works on providing them with tools that enable them to get their rights and enjoy them.

As the gender equality project is in its last stages of implementation, awareness sessions activities are still in process, where awareness and professional activities that aim to empower women and build their capacities. The Palestinian woman is used to facing life difficulties and hard conditions, and she had made lots of sacrifices for her family and children. Therefore, when she had the chance to have some time to look after herself, she took advantage of it.

In this issue, you will read about the project achievements during the period covered by this newsletter (February and March), you will also read about the international women day, and finally there is an article about the immigration of women to Sicily in Italy.





Project's Activities:

First: Legal Awareness Sessions. During this period, a number of awareness sessions and meetings were conducted. One of these sessions covered the topic of planning rights.

Second: Training for trainers. A 4 days TOT training was conducted at Al-Maqdese office in Al-Ram. 24 attendants of women organizations participated in this training which aimed to introduce them to communication methods and other topics related to TOT. The goal of this course is to empower participants and make them able to supervise and coordinate training course, in addition to providing them with the necessary tools and skills that a trainer needs such as presentation skills, communicating skills, building teams skills, and realizing body language.

Third: Production of a Documentary. Through this period, the first draft of the documentary was prepared. This documentary tells stories of Palestinian women in East Jerusalem who were displaced or whom their houses were demolished.

Fourth: Vocational Training Courses. During the last two months, vocational training courses- which aim to empower women economically and providing them with experience and skills within their interest areas- are being implemented.

On the occasion of International Women's Day

Al-Maqdese praises the resilience of Palestinian women in Jerusalem

Since the beginning of Jerusalem occupation in 1967, Palestinian women have resisted displacement attempts and stood resilient against violations of the spouses' right to residence and housing as it is the case for thousands of Palestinian families who suffer the bitter reality of displacement and related trauma that affects all the family members. Palestinian women have endured instability, insecurity and constant anxiety in cases of threats of demolitions as well as the financial burdens resulting from heavy fines imposed by Israeli authorities.

As an expression of solidarity with the Palestinian women, on this distinguished day, Al-Maqdese continuously praises the resilience of the Palestinian women. Statistics show that since 2000 until the present day, 1900 Palestinian women are threatened with displacement and 1257 women were actually displaced. These shocking numbers denote stories of families and women resilience and patience to confront the occupation in Jerusalem.

The Palestinian women are denied from their right to live in security as many suffer from the consequences of arbitrary Israeli laws on family unification, especially following the approval of "Nationality and Entry into Israel" Law (Temporary Order 2003). The law prohibits Palestinians and those of Palestinian origins married to Israeli citizens or permanent residents in Israel from to live with their spouses inside Israel. As part of the illegal annexation of Jerusalem to the municipality borders of the "Israeli state", the law targets Palestin-

ians living in Jerusalem in the first place and their children living outside the city because it bans their registration at the Israeli Ministry of Interior. Hence, the Palestinian women face multi-dimensional threats of being separated from their families and children.





Additionally, “The center of life” law makes the situation more difficult for Palestinian women. The Legal Clinic at Al-Maqdese deals with several Palestinian women within their workplace. Mrs. Wajiha Bamyia comments on her suffering in relation to being unified with her family. “I could not attend the funeral of both my brother and mother who passed away in Jordan. I, sometimes, think about taking a risk, but I think again about my children, husband, and house.” Mrs Wajiha could not visit her family in Jordan. She cannot travel since she has no identity card. This requirement threatens the status of permanent residence for a Jerusalemite living abroad or outside the borders of the municipality of Jerusalem.

Within the framework of the international law, systematic home demolitions and confiscation of Palestinian property in East Jerusalem are grave breaches of the international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Considered among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, the international community should provide additional protection to women in cases of conflict and occupation and should work towards ending the violations committed against women.

Nevertheless, Israel has always ignored the international organizations’ call to respect the law and comply with the international legal framework. The lack of effective mechanisms ensuring Israel’s adherence to the international human rights’ law leaves an adverse effect

on Israeli's compliance with its obligations as a country which signed and ratified the international conventions. In addition, it is important to note that Israel was not prosecuted for its grave breaches of Geneva Conventions and these violations cannot be even referred to the International Criminal Court as Israel is not a member. Not to mention, USA is a member in the Security Council which stands in the frontlines to defend Israel as it used the Veto 37 times in favor of Israel.

Under the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, Jerusalemite women lose their homes and become insecure. Nevertheless, these women struggle courageously to ensure the unity of their families and to protect them from the heinous and racist practices of the Israeli occupation. Hence, Al-Maqdese calls on the international community to adopt new and effective methods to defend Palestinian women in Jerusalem and improve their situation. It also praises the role of Palestinian women in resistance and passes its regards to the Palestinian female prisoners, particularly Hana Shalabi who is continuing her hunger strike for the 21 days until the day of her release and the punishment of soldiers who abused her during her arrest.

Moreover, Al-Maqdese continues offering all possible psychological and legal support for Palestinian women in Jerusalem to support their existence in Jerusalem, namely MSD Legal Clinic deals with several cases related to residence, identity cards revocation, family unification, children registration and other cases related to the residence of Palestinians in Jerusalem. Currently, Al-Maqdese is offering vocational training for around 100 women in Jerusalem to enhance their social conditions through empowering them economically and help them sustain their families. In addition, it also conducts several awareness sessions aiming at raising awareness of Jerusalemite women on their rights under the Israeli occupation and on mechanisms to realize these rights using suitable legal methods.

The new Sicilians

For those familiar with the streets of Palermo, the huge variety of faces of different colours and creeds is no longer a surprise. Immigration to the Sicilian capital from inside and outside the European Union has been a reality for several decades, and the stories behind the faces are as varied as the countries that have been left behind.

The immigration of women is a slightly more recent phenomenon, but an increasingly important one. Domestic staff, carers, wives and mothers, manual workers, shop assistants, prostitutes, political refugees and asylum seekers, and small business owners, to cite just a few examples, from Latin America to Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia, who have undertaken long and difficult journeys, sometimes illegally or under coercion, in the hope of finding a better life on the European continent. The harsh social realities of contemporary Sicily mean that the experience often doesn't live up to expectations.

Women began migrating to Sicily in the late 60s, often following ex-colonial patterns and seeking employment as domestic staff. They were followed in the 70s by waves of Ethiopian, Filipino, Latin American and Cape Verdean women, and in those years formal and informal support networks were created and managed by immigrants themselves, who would assist younger women in the first steps towards finding employment. The 80s saw women from various Arab countries arriving in Sicily for family reunification reasons, a phenomenon that continues to this day.

Nowadays legal immigration tends to follow several patterns: family reunification, which is made extremely difficult by long and complicated bureaucratic procedures, economic migration situations in which the woman in question manages to find a work contract allowing her to stay in the country, and situations in which the women flee unsafe political situations in their own countries. Women are currently said to represent around 45% of immigrants in Sicily (an increase from 26% in 1990), though the true figures are difficult to estimate due to the high amount of people living "under the radar". Obtaining a "permesso di soggiorno" allowing the person to reside and work legally in the country can take months to years.

A strong profile is emerging, that of the "transnational mother", who works - often looking after other women's children - in order to send money back to their own

families in the home country. “Patchwork” families, in which the mother and either the younger or elder children, depending on the situation, live in Sicily while other family members (grandparents, husband and remaining children) stay in the country of origin, are increasingly common.

Female migration to Sicily is characterised by the plurality and complexity of the reasons behind it and the realities of day-to-day life for those concerned, and is undoubtedly a subject that deserves greater attention from institutions, civil society and individuals. The importance of these female figures in their host societies, countries of origin and to ensuing second generations should not be underestimated.

