



Courtesy of
Palestinian
Family
Planning and
Protection
Association*

COMBATTING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Women's and human rights organizations are concerned about the level of violence that has historically been observed in Palestinian society and continues to this day. As violence threatens the very structure of society and the family, these organizations are intensifying their efforts to confront gender-based violence against women and girls. Public awareness efforts are reaching even remote and marginalized areas and help bring this phenomenon to the surface, giving a voice to women.

While many organizations have focused on raising awareness of violence and gender equity among women and girls, they have neglected working with men, generally the main perpetrators of domestic violence. As a result, a gender awareness gap arose whereby women are more aware of their rights, and men remain captive of habits and traditions. The Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPA), therefore, has begun to target men and young men in efforts to raise their awareness and involve them in activities and training sessions that focus on gender equity. Consequently, new areas of work regarding violence perpetrated against women have sprung up, involving numerous male advocates in all regions. These men volunteers coordinate awareness campaigns on gender equity and aim to combat all forms of violence.

To this day, too many women in poor and marginalized areas remain victims of violence and cannot report this abuse for fear of being blamed and stigmatized. They also fear that violence against them might intensify in the absence of laws that deter perpetrators. PFPPA and its partner organizations intervene on behalf of many marginalized and poor women who are victims of all forms of violence that include physical, emotional, and economic abuse. Efforts aim to raise their awareness and provide them with the necessary support and empowerment to confront and end the violence. Additionally, we advocate and lobby for laws that are fair to women – and may serve as a deterrent to perpetrators – and work to

amend the laws that undermine women's rights and hinder their access to comprehensive services under the national referral system.

The major challenge lies in finding ways to alleviate women's fear of reporting violence, which is particularly strong in some areas of Palestine. We need to double our efforts and reach out to them, building trust and helping them confront and end the violence. The prevailing social culture is a major impediment to confronting gender-based violence because many segments of Palestinian society consider any activity that raises women's awareness of violence

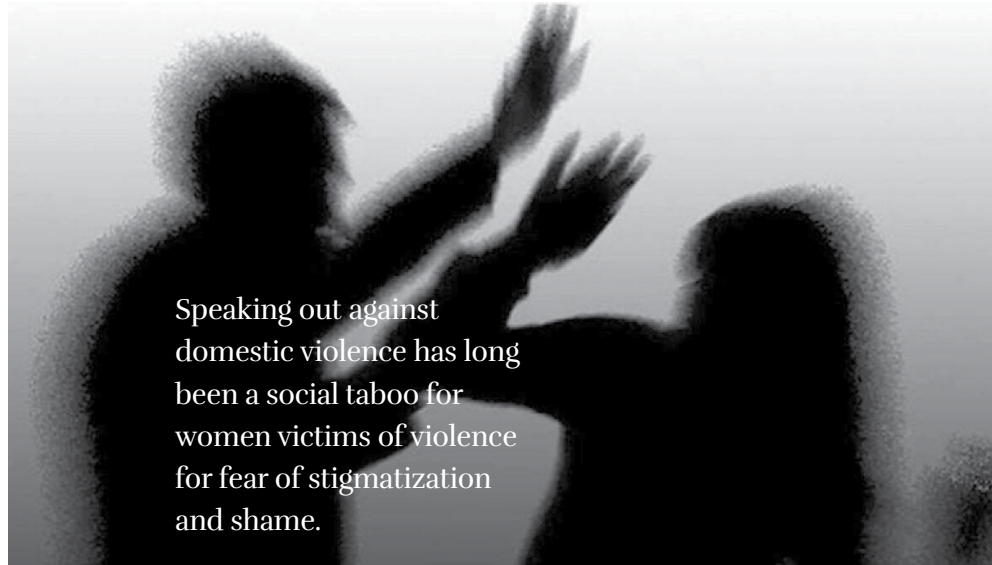



Speaking out against domestic violence has long been a social taboo for women victims of violence for fear of stigmatization and shame.

as an incitement of women against men. They fear that their 'edifice' that is based on injustice and the violation of women's rights may fall apart. Another impediment lies in the cantonization of the Palestinian territories through checkpoints, imposed by the occupation forces, that cut off remote areas and hinder our ability to access the women and

marginalized communities that live in these areas. Our teams have faced many difficulties when trying to cross checkpoints.

Women's lack of economic empowerment, resources, and opportunities makes it difficult for victims to make life decisions that may put an end to the violence.





The work of organizations that combat violence is very important. Yet, PFPPA and its partner organizations are facing numerous challenges and difficulties at both individual and collective levels when working on cases of domestic and gender-based violence.

PFPPA hence underlines the importance of women's economic empowerment as a means to fight and end violence. Despite all difficulties on the ground, we are determined to combat all forms of violence against women and girls and believe in women's right to self-determination, a dignified life, and the respect of their rights.

** This article has been translated from Arabic by Rania Filfil.*

Established in 1964, the Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPA) is a member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.