Women in Jordan
Continuing Violence and Absent Protection

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor
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Introduction

Violence against Jordanian woman (Statistics – 2019)

Incidents & Testimonies

• Ahlam

• Fatima Abu Aklik

• Hanan Bani Nasr

• Tala

• Fatima

• Iman Al-Khatib

• Statistic showing the number of battered women in 2019

Legal Background

Recommendations
Introduction

For many years, Jordan has been witnessing a rapid increase in the number of cases of violence against women, what is also known as gender-based violence, a term used to refer to the acts of violence intentionally committed against women, such as sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence, and many others.

Related official local statistics indicate that Jordan is still witnessing such rapid increase. For instance, during 2019, Jordan recorded 21 cases of domestic killings – an increase of %300 compared to 2018 which saw seven murders only.
In the same year, 6,965 women were victims of violence, 810 of them were able to get aid from the five battered women shelters belonging to the Ministry of Social Development while the rest of cases, especially who live in the remote areas, are still marginalized and suffering from various violations. The governorates of Balqa and Zarqa, west and east of the country, witness the highest rate of violence against married women, which amount to %36. On the other hand, Ajloun and Kerak witness less violence with a percentage of %10, while it is %27 in the capital Amman.

According to Public Security Directorate's statistical crime report, during 2019, the total number of crimes committed in Jordan reached 26,521, which is a %7.57 increase compared to 2018 which witnessed 24,654 crimes. Consequently, the rise of crimes committed against women is linked to the rise of crimes committed in general, which results from social and economic factors.

Despite the rise of acts of violence committed against women in recent years, the official measures are still inadequate to curb such crimes, which in turn pose a serious danger to women as well as to society as a whole. The National Survey, which is conducted to measure the extent of violence against women, suffers a substantial shortfall for it does not include married women, -50-year-old-women who have been married before, or -15-year-old girls who are unmarried. In other words, about one million unmarried women are excluded from the survey.
The social reality in Jordan forces battered women to stay silent which makes them think that reporting won’t help them or that their fate will be unknown in relation to their protection and rights. Women fear the reaction of the oppressor when they issue a complaint against him. Moreover, they lack the adequate legal knowledge and the required procedures when they face violence. Such fear and reluctance may necessarily put them in more danger, especially, when such violence causes serious injuries, and threatens their lives.

Based on the Jordanian system of social protection and psychological support services, it is obvious it needs to be radically reformed. In other words, such a system has to focus not only on protecting women, but also and most importantly, on empowering them. The special attention the official bodies and civil society organizations give to violence against women is a solid foundation to build on. Several organizations in the Kingdom pay assiduous attention to women rights. In addition, it is clear that there is a governmental focus on this issue, where the Family Protection Department centers are spread across the country, besides two centers in Syrian refugee camps. Further, several organizations do provide family protection and hotlines for battered women, the most famous of which is 911.

The woman protection system the Jordanian government provides puts in considerable efforts in the context of hearing the complaints of women, ensuring their rights to judicial and social protection, and offering them
shelter at the Ministry of Social Development. Still, developing and adopting more effective and practical measures is highly needed, ensuring the protection and empowerment of women. The government system does not only need to focus on protecting women, but also needs to adopt new means to empower women through teaching and training them, so they could become financially independent. Such training should include getting them back to their normal lives.

Instead of directing women to the judicial path, which would often bring them positive results and a protection order, employees in women rights organization direct them to social paths.

It is undoubtedly clear that the phenomenon of violence against women is a gross violation of the international laws of human rights. Such violence contains discrimination, physical and psychological harm to women. Based on the convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence—the Istanbul Convention, violence against women is defined as:

“violence against women” is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life;
In this brief report, Euro-Med Monitor highlights the violence committed against Jordanian woman by showcasing statistics, indicating the serious danger this crime holds. In addition, the report highlights some women's testaments, narrating their experiences about violence. Further, the report contains a legal perspective in relation to such phenomenon, either locally—Legislations in Jordan—or internationally, the laws of human rights.
Violence against Jordanian Women

Statistics 2019

Only 19% of married women who have been physically or sexually abused by their husbands sought help and only 3% filed a complaint.

21 domestic killings against women during 2019, an increase of 200% compared to 2018.

6,965 women were victims of violence in 2019.

25.9% of wives between the ages of 14 and 49 have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their husbands.

24% of battered married women were injured as a result of physical or sexual violence including cuts, bruises, or pain.

71.1% of married women have experienced physical violence from their current husbands.

13.3% of girls have experienced physical violence from their brothers.

15.1% of married women have experienced violence from their previous husbands.

11.9% of girls have experienced physical violence from their fathers.

26 out of 100 wives have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their husbands.

8 out of 10 women experience electronic harassment.

Unofficial sources
Incidents & Testimonies

Violence against Jordanian woman has recently has become one of the most serious violations that must be confronted. It has become important because of its enormous tragic increase on one hand, and the inaction towards finding a radical solution on the other hand. This has pushed Euro-Med Monitor to reveal a number of witnesses of women who have experienced such violations. Those women have not received any support or actions from any international organization.

1. Ahlam

On 18th July 2020, a -60year-Jordanian father smashed his -40year-old daughter Ahlam with a stone. Shortly after, he carelessly sat beside her drinking a cup of tea.

This gross murder has taken place at Safut in Balqa Governorate in the northwest of Amman. One of the eyewitnesses, who posted the details of the incident on his twitter account, said that “It was Friday at 9 P.M. when I heard the crying voice of a girl, running from her father in the street. She was nick-bleeding and was screaming for help from her mother who did nothing to help her. Her father, as all residents in the neighborhood were standing, caught her, and then kept smashing her head with a stone until she passed away.”

He added: “After he deadly smashed her head, he carelessly sat drinking
a cup of tea, where some of the residents had tried to reach her body. Her brothers, however, prevented them”.

“Ahlam faced a number of violations at the hands of her family in the past which forced her to escape more than once, resorting to the protection of the family of Jordanian Public Security Directorate. Every time her family signed a pledge not to treat her badly. Nonetheless, they never fulfilled their pledge,” he continued.

2. **Fatima Abu Aklik**

In Jerash city, for 13 years, -37 year-old wife Fatima has suffered from her husband, who happened to be her cousin. On 9 November 2019, he gouged her eyes.

“On 9th of November, a fight started between Fatima and her husband, where she ran to the kids’ room. He threatened to kill her in front of her children or in the room alone. Fatima chose to be killed alone. In turn, children kept begging their father not to kill her,” according to Euro-Med Monitor’s eyewitnesses.

He added: “Fatima was trying to cover her face when her husband was beating her. However, he gouged her eye with his finger, where she kept begging not to gouge the other eye, so she still could be able to see her children. Ignoring her pleas, he gouged the other eye, and Fatima become completely blind.”
3. **Hanan Bani Nasr**

On 8th March 2020 Jordanian woman, Hanan Bani Nasr, has been murdered in the hands of her husband. He drowned her in the Kuraymah-based King Abdullah Canal, which immediately led to her death.”

Her husband confessed during the investigation that “There were disputes between me and my wife. I took the opportunity to kill her when she asked me to take a picture of her with the water of the dam behind her. I pushed her into the canal where she drowned and died”.

He added, “She has been pushing me too much; that is what drove me to kill her”.

4. **Tala**

On October 2019,13, Jordanian girl Tala was sexually harassed by a taxi driver while she was in the car. Tala said: «While I was in a taxi, I noticed that the driver was staring at me in creepy way all the way through the car mirror. I was not comfortable at all. I later found out that he was masturbating in the car while looking at me”.

Tala filmed the incident with her mobile phone and posted the video on Twitter.
5. **Fatima**

Fatima, 23, suffers abuse and ill-treatment from her husband. She said: “My family forced me to get married at the age of 16. I was a student at school at the time. I have two children, a boy and a girl. My husband treats me very badly. He always beats, insults, and neglects me and my children”.

«My husband does not provide us with anything, such as expenses and basic life needs. There is nothing I can do for me and my children».

6. **Iman Al-Khatib**

Iman Al-Khatib, 36, tells the details of abuse and violence that she suffered from at the hands of her family and husband, as she said: “During my marriage, I suffered all kinds of beatings, insults and violence at the hands of my husband, which led to my divorce from him. I resorted to living with my family, knowing that I had one son”.

“Since I moved to live with my family after my divorce from my husband, I have been subjected to blackmail and abuse from my family. They were asking me to give them money. Moreover, my brother kicked me and my son out of the house and threatened to assault me if I did not bring him money even if it was in “an unethical way” [prostitution]... This prompted me to go to my friend’s house to sleepover, because resorting to my family did not help me find shelter”.

Statistics of battered women during 2019

Statistics issued by the Ministry of Social Development for 2019 showed that the number of women who reported to the social service offices of the Family Protection Department amounted to about 4,527 adults and 2,438 minors, with a total of about 6,965 cases.
Legal Background

There is no doubt that violence against women is still an issue of widespread controversy in Jordan, especially with regard to Jordanian national laws and how they deal with this crime. This report aims to clarify the deficiencies of the Jordanian laws with regard to their treatment of this phenomenon, and it highlights the international conventions that fights violence and racism against women and guarantee them their rights.

First: Jordanian law

- Article 6 in the Jordanian Constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, language, or religion, but it does not address gender-based discrimination.

- The Jordanian law criminalizes some forms of violence committed against women, which is reflected in Article 7 of the Jordanian Penal Code, which considers rape and sexual harassment as crimes, but this does not apply to marital rape.

- Article 98 of the Panel Code was amended in order to reject mitigating excuses for crimes committed in the event of anger, as part of a package of amendments to the Penal Code that was adopted in 2017. Article 308, which stipulates that the rapist could be saved prosecution if he married his victim, has been canceled after pressure from the Jordanian civil society.
In 2008, Jordan adopted the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence – Law No. 6. Despite the important amendments to this law in 2017, it did not mention the issue of gender-based violence. However, it can be considered in general as a protection law as it provides for restraining orders against the aggressor, as well as taking immediate protection measures in cases of domestic violence. However, this law contains some important shortcomings, including the failure to criminalize forms of violence such as restrictions on women’s freedom and choices, economic abuse, psychological violence, and marital rape.

The Jordanian Labor Law did not stipulate the imposition of penalties for “sexual harassment”, but imposed penalties on “sexual assault.” This is mentioned by Article 29 A/6, which paved the way for more sexual harassment. As a result, local human rights organizations reported high rates of sexual harassment in workplaces by more than %42. This prompted the government to amend the Labor Law and submit a proposal to the House of Representatives to add the phrase “sexual harassment” and some other relevant amendments, but the House Work Committee deleted the phrase, which indicates a lack of recognition of the prevalence of the phenomenon of harassment, especially at workplaces and its impact on the withdrawal of women from the labor force, or not joining it in the first place.
Second: International Law

- The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women recognizes in many texts that violence is part of discrimination against women. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) addressed this in recommendations No. 12 and No. 19 by stating that “The definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.”
- The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ texts stressed on the protection of the rights of women and the family, considering them the fundamental and basic cell in the society who are entitled to enjoy the protection of the international community.
- The 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women is the first international instrument that defines violence against women and explicitly addresses it. Article 1 of the declaration stipulates that: “For the purposes of this Declaration, the term «violence against women» means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” Article 2 also stipulated: “Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:
“(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.”

- In 1999, the United Nations adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and designated November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.
- The 2011 Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is the second legally binding regional instrument on violence against women.
Recommendations

Violence against women has become a global issue that is not limited to certain peoples, and it is primarily a human rights concern, as it threatens the lives of women. Violence against women has disastrous consequences not only for women, but also for the children, family, and society as a whole. The most important causes that have led to violence in societies can be summarized by the poor economic conditions, the low level of education, the lack of dialogue within the family and society, and the absence of protective laws. All of these factors directly or indirectly encouraged violence within the family.

Based on the contents of this brief report, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor recommends the following:

• The Jordanian Parliament should enact legislations and laws that ensure adequate protection for all women in a manner that guarantees respect for their safety and dignity. These laws should include strict penalties to deter attempts to abuse women, violate their dignity, and threaten their lives.

• Human cadres should be trained to deal with cases of violence and provide adequate protection and support for victims.

• Media institutions should implement special training programs aimed at educating society about violence against women and restructure the
media discourse on violence against women.

- Violence against women must be given more attention by conducting research and studies on this issue in order to accurately understand its causes and societal implications, study the effectiveness of the measures taken to address it and re-evaluate them again, and propose more effective ways to address it.

- Activating the role of the judiciary in resolving conflicts arising from cases of domestic violence, by following up settlements instead of following administrative procedures and strengthening the activation of protection orders.

- Issuing medical reports for the battered woman because of their great role in strengthening the position of women if they choose to go to court.

- Approving the witness protection system.

- Promoting community campaigns that reject violence against women.

- Providing women with greater opportunities to work to enable them to participate economically in the society, and to combat poverty, which is a major cause for the increase of violence against women.
Women in Jordan: Continuing Violence and Absent Protection