



*Crimes of Women's Killing in Palestine
In the period 2004-2006*

**Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization Against
Domestic Violence Against Women
(Al Muntada)**

March 2007

Funded by



Crimes of Women's Killing in Palestine in the period 2004-2006

Follow up and supervision

Ohaila Shomar – Coordinator, Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization Against Domestic Violence Against Women (*Al Muntada*)

Advisory Committee

Rahmeh Mansour
Eatidal Al Jariri
Shatha Odeh
Lawyer Sana Aranki
Ohaila Shomar

Research team

Principal researcher: Dr. Lamis Abu Nahleh
Field researchers: Fatmeh Al-Tous
Oraib Al-Mimi
Suad Ishtewi
Kifah Rujoub
Amal Abu Aisha

Translation and Arabic editing

Dr. Malek Qutteina

English editing

Nicola Nasser

March 2007

Copyright : Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization Against Domestic Violence Against Women (*Al Muntada*)

Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization Against Domestic Violence Against Women (*Al Muntada*)

Overview of the Forum

The Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization Against Domestic Violence Against Women (*Al Muntada*) was established in 2000 as a result of an initiative of a group of Palestinian NGOs working in areas of women empowerment in general and combating violence against women in particular. Through their practical experience, this group of NGOs have found that many Palestinian women are experiencing all kinds of violence, including psychological, physical, sexual, economic, political and social violence. This perception was corroborated by several studies and research that demonstrated how serious the problem is and what adverse impact it has on the society in general.

To address this issue, the Palestinian NGOs found it necessary to combine efforts in the strife to combat this problem and convert it from a private issue to a public issue.

Vision

Al Muntada looks forward for a Palestinian society that is based on respect of women's rights as human rights and on social justice and equality within an independent democratic Palestinian State that seeks to ensure equity and equality for all members of the society.

Mission

We, Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization Against Domestic Violence Against Women (*Al Muntada*), work in order to contribute to ending the gender-based violence by mobilizing the public opinion, lobbying with decision-makers and considering violence against women a public issue.

Overall goal

Adopt a strategy that is comprehensive, integrated and continuous in nature for coordinating the work of the Forum's member institutions to end all forms of violence against Palestinian women and to shed light on this problem as a public issue that concerns all social groups in the Palestinian society.

Current members of Al Muntada

1. Bisan Center for Research and Development.
2. The Palestinian Working Women Society for Development.
3. Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling.
4. Women's Affairs Committees.
5. The Palestinian Counseling Center.
6. Family Defense Society.
7. Women's Studies Center.
8. Sawa – All the Women Together Today & Tomorrow.
9. Association of Women's Action for Training and Rehabilitation.
10. Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association.
11. Rural Women's Development Society/PARC Agricultural Relief Committee.
12. Psychosocial Counseling Center.
13. Women's Affair Center – Gaza.

Al Muntada is currently 2004-2007 hosted by

Sawa – All the Women Together Today & Tomorrow

Tel: 02-5324122

02-5324672

Fax: 02-5324025

P.O. Box: 69429, Jerusalem 95908

info@sawa.ps , www.sawa.ps

moonlight

Acknowledgement

Unfortunately, Palestinian women, young and old and even female children are subjected to violence and every year a number of them had fallen victims of the so called “honor killing;” however “Al-Muntada” has documented an increase in the killing of women during the last three years (2004-06) under so many pretexts to justify this criminal act.

Sadly, we can affirm that the existing effective laws in the West Bank and Gaza Strip fail to protect women against potential death by the members of their families. Sustaining the enforcement of these laws can be attributed to the lack of public awareness and a serious, coordinated and meaningful debate about the subject.

Hence, we at the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization Against Domestic Violence Against Women (Al-Muntada) felt the need for this report to address this critical social and legal issue and encourage public debate and dialogue about it; this report is intended to be an effective documentary for the decision-makers within the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), academic community, media and women’s organizations to seriously address the subject and think of drastic action to stop this criminal act against women.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all individuals and organizations, police, families of the victims who contributed crucial information that made this report possible.

We do highly appreciate the moral and financial contribution of Oxfam/ Quebec; without their unconditional support, encouragement and understanding this report would not have been accomplished.

Our thanks go as well to Dr. Lamees Abu Nahleh and to the list of researchers who worked hard under difficult circumstances to carry out all the necessary work to produce this report.

Last but not least, and in spite of the very sad problem of domestic violence in general and “honor killing” in particular, which this report reveals, we feel we are eager as well as obliged to continue our work on behalf of and alongside Palestinian women for a better and safe life with dignity , freedom and protective laws.

Yes to Life, No to Killing

Palestinian Non-governmental Organization Against Domestic Violence Against Women.

March 2007

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	7
2. Honor Crimes: Global Issue.....	8
3. Conceptual Frame.....	11
4. Methodology.....	13
5. Data Analysis.....	16
5.1. Profile of Victims.....	16
5.2. Method of Killing.....	19
5.3. Perpetrators.....	19
5.4. Honorable, Dishonorable Conduct.....	20
5.5. Qualitative Analysis: Issues for Consideration.....	25
5.5.1 Prevalence of ‘honor killing’	26
5.5.2 Suspected Female Deaths.....	30
5.5.3. ‘Honor’ as Cover for Killing.....	32
5.5.4. Killing of Women: Family/Male affair.	33
5.5.5. Family and Community Pressure.....	36
5.5.6. Marriage as Solution.....	38
5.5.7. Women, Girls Bear the Burden... ..	40
6. Conclusion and Recommendations.....	44

Crimes of Women's Killing in Palestine

"Honor Killing/Honor Crimes"

In the period 2004-2006

1- Introduction

The underlying general goal of this report on the status of “honor killing” in Palestine during a three-year period, from 2004 – 2006, is to highlight the potential dangers of the criminal acts committed in the name of “honor” to the lives of Palestinian girls and women, to make the relevant data publicly available in order to raise public awareness of the issue, and to use the findings to lobby with Palestinian authorities and all other relevant parties to pass legislation of gender sensitive laws, which would consider the killing of girls and women under the banner of “family honor” a crime as well as to hold them accountable and responsible for protecting their lives, well-being and human rights. Moreover, the findings would hopefully be useful in informing those involved in development policy and planning to promote programs that would respond to gender needs and rectify the imbalance of power in gender relations.

Specifically, the report attempts to:-

- a) Review the concept of “honor killing” in the available literature,
- b) Document the cases of “honor killing” committed during the reported period (between 2004 and 2006),
- c) Present a profile of the girls and women who were victims of “honor killing” during the same period,
- d) Give a socio-cultural and legal analysis of the documented cases,
- e) And, to give recommendations that would help change the status quo of women to become protected against violence and killing.

The purpose of this study is not to uncover totally unknown matters, but to relate the findings thereof to earlier findings based on the documented cases of women's killing.

What distinguishes this report from other studies addressing violence, including “honor killing,” committed against women and girls in Palestine is that it focuses *only on cases of actual killing during the 2004 – 06 period, which were officially registered as “honor killing;” it also deals with cases that were considered murder with criminal liability, yet all the surrounding events hint that the victims were accused or suspected of “tarnishing family/male honor.”*

2- Honor Crimes: Global Issue

The crime of “honor killing” has been identified as the most extreme form of violence against girls and women and a serious violation of their most basic human right, simply their right to live. Not only is the killing of women a global phenomenon but also the way it is legally addressed and resolved by the judicial system.

Recent research on the issue of “honor” crimes criticizes the flexible use of the phrase as denoting “a type of violence against women by claimed 'motivation' rather than by perpetrator or form of manifestation.” (Welchman and Hossan, 2005)

The use of the term of “honor” crime is problematic because it is limited to the killing of girls or women by their male relatives, extra-judicially accusing them on the basis of their own belief or suspicion of sexual misconduct that sullied family honor.

Moreover, the term views killing in the name of “family/male honor” as a punishment for girls or women who violate the norms and traditions set by the social-familial ideology to regulate female sexual behavior and social role; thus, the primary focus is not the criminal act committed by the perpetrator.

In Welchmann and Hossan, the researchers adopt the term “crimes of honor” defining it as a notion that “encompass(es) a variety of manifestations of violence against women, including 'honour killings', assault, confinement or imprisonment, and interference with

choice in marriage, where the publicly articulated 'justification' is attributed to a social order claimed to require the preservation of a concept of 'honor' vested in male (family and/or conjugal) control over women and specifically women's sexual conduct: actual, suspected or potential." (Ibid: 4)

Hence the definition of the term refers to "honor crimes" as a broad category of crimes that includes women's killing as well as all forms of violence committed against them. It also extends beyond penalizing women for sexual misconduct to include other behaviors that challenge male control; furthermore, the definition expands the category of perpetrators of "honor killing" to include husbands and sexual intimates in addition to blood related male kin such as fathers, brothers, uncles and cousins. The former type is termed "conjugal honor" and the latter "family honor." (Ibid: 5)

In comparison to the above conceptualization of the notion of "honor crimes," Shalhoub-Kevorkian prefers an expanded version of the notion, which she derives from "the voices of victims." *Femicide* refers to any act of violence that gives girls or women the feel of fearing for their lives under the banner of "honor," being accused of conduct that implies engagement in a sexual behavior or act. She uses the concept, femicide, to refer to "the status of entering a 'death zone' that stretches on a continuum from the feeling by the victim (or her helper) that she is under the threat of being killed, to the loss of the victim's life." (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2000:10)

Based on this definition, Shalhoub-Kevorkian classifies *femicide* into four categories or patterns: The victim fears the loss of her life without being subject to any physical or verbal abuse; the victim's fear of being killed is instigated by being actually threatened verbally or non-verbally; the victim escapes an unsuccessful attempt to end her life, and, finally, the victim is actually murdered. (Ibid)

For a long time, "honor crimes" committed against girls and women have been considered specific to backward and underdeveloped countries, whereby (Middle) eastern and Muslim patriarchal cultures were blamed

for its incidence. However, recent academic literature and reports by international organizations and human rights and women activists recognize the fact that “honor crimes” are not confined to one society or culture, but they appear to be present in various countries around the world, including western and eastern societies, irrespective of the prevailing cultural traditions or religious beliefs.

However, nations vary in the way they deal legally and socially with “honor crimes.” In 2003, the UN Special Rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights reported to the international community the occurrence of “honor crimes” in Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, Iraq, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Qatar, Sweden, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. (Coomaraswamy, 2005)

The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW) cites an estimated total of 5000 women murdered around the world under the banner of “honor killings”. In Pakistan alone a total of 4000 “honor” killings occurred between 1996 and 2003, with murdered women outnumbering murdered men by more than 50%. (A/61/122/ Add.1/ 2005:40). In addition, the UNDAW reports that studies of *femicide* from Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States of America show that 40 to 70 percent of female victims were killed by their husbands or boyfriends. (A/61/122/Add.1-2005:38)

The Arab Human Development Report points out that “Statistics indicate, for example, that between May 2004 and March 2005, there were 20 honor killings and 15 attempted killings in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory on the basis of honor. Official statistics also show that 20 women were killed in Jordan annually on the same pretext.” (AHDR2005:116)

Citing various sources on the killing of women in the West, Welchman and Hossain points out that, like in the Middle East, the legal system accommodates the murder of women in certain circumstances: When husbands or sexual intimate partners kill their

partners in the West, they claim they were motivated by “passion” and committed the killing due to “extreme emotional distress” because they know the “loss of control” reduces the blame. This conceptualization is another version of the concepts of “honor/shame” and the “fit of fury.” Within this context, when both legal systems in the United States and the Middle East resolve cases of women’s murder they reflect gender discrimination tolerating the mitigation of a crime at the expense of women. By law, women in the West have less legal protection as wives and lovers than men; indeed, legal gender discrimination reaches over to the right of women to choose staying in a relationship or leaving it. (Welchman and Hossan, 2005:11)

Thus, the prevalence of “honor crimes” or “passion crimes” is worldwide and gender discrimination of the legal and judicial systems seem to be a primary source causing the victimization of women. This consistency in conceptualizing and addressing the killing of women shows them as victims of the one and same worldwide trauma, in that they form the weakest link in the social chain although they vary only in the degree their rights as human beings are protected or unprotected by the law, its interpretation and application by the judicial system.

3- Conceptual Frame

This report does not attempt to redefine the notion of “honor crime” or “femicide.” For the purpose of the analysis of cases, it adopts the conceptualization of one category of “honor crimes or femicide,” defined above, which refers to the actual killing of women who were accused of a potential, suspected, or actual sexual misconduct “tarnishing family/conjugal /male honor.”

However, the report also considers the notion of murder crime committed against women who were not accused of “honor” indictment. It addresses women's killing, in general, which refers to any murder crime committed against a girl or a woman who is perceived as a threat to the social order or accused of having actually disturbed it.

Accordingly, maintaining or violating social order is not limited to women's sexuality or “sexual misconduct,” and maintaining or violating “family/male honor” is included among the acts that maintain or disturb the general social order. Women's killing is considered a manifestation of the existing power relations and power control of the strong over the weak, of males over females, of the old over the young and of those holding a privileged social status over those who have a subordinate social status; although it is considered an individual act, it is also a manifestation of community control and social policing.

Two Palestinian Social Structures

The social order in Palestine is regulated by two co-existing structures, the formal and the informal.

The political conditions imposed by the Israeli military occupation since 1967 and by the Oslo Accords since 1993 on the Palestinian society and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), coupled with the subjective shortcomings of the PNA itself, have hampered the development of effective formal structures that can impose the rule of law and order and allow for an efficient operation of the judicial system.

This situation has allowed the informal structures existing prior to the establishment of the PNA not only to persist and maintain a de facto power but also to become empowered. To date, the legislation of laws is still incomplete; there is no clear-cut separation between the executive and judicial powers and the judiciary lacks adequate and well-trained personnel.

Although the Basic Law (constitution) stipulates equality before the law irrespective of race, color, religion, sex, political convictions or disability, the constitutional provision of gender equality has not been translated into all the issued laws.

Up to date, the PNA Legislative Council (PLC) has not issued a Palestinian Family Law or Penal Code; the Jordanian family law of 1960 is applied in the West Bank and the Egyptian law is applied in Gaza

Strip. The provisions of the applied Family law and Penal code the most relevant to the issue of women's killing do not guarantee gender equality. In comparison to men, women's human rights are not legally protected; on the contrary, women are disadvantaged and discriminated against by both effective laws.

The informal structures, such as kinship, patriarchy and the tribal traditional system all contribute to defining the physical and social boundaries within which female and male individuals can move and act. They are a primary contributor to regulating the social behavior, roles, responsibilities and relations of the members of the society in general. This is achieved through ensuring the enforcement of the social norms and “honor” codes, which define mobility, marriage choice, type and level of education, dress codes, profession, sexual behavior and the like. Holding on to the concept of “honor” serves the purpose of maintaining the social power of the informal structures and serving their material and social interests. Although the co-existence of the formal and the formal structures is expected to bring about conflict, often both structures coincide in attitudes and practices when their interests meet.

4- Methodology

Based on the objectives set in the project document, the report is expected to document and analyze the cases of “honor killing” in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during the past three years (2004-2006).

First, the methodology and research procedures were discussed in the meetings held between *Al-Muntada* and the researcher and it was agreed to follow primarily a qualitative approach although a statistical approach would also be necessary to create a socio-economic profile of the victims of “honor killing.” However neither the scope nor the time limit of the project allows conducting a statistical survey.

Second, it was found the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC) has documented a total of 13 cases of “honor killing,” which the center made available to us for analysis. Since the 13 cases do not cover all the incidents of “honor killing”

during the past three years, it was necessary to search for the rest of the cases and document them. For this purpose, a questionnaire containing both structured and semi-structured questions was prepared to guide the fieldworkers in collecting the targeted data. Though the findings of the questionnaire cannot be analyzed statistically according to significance and determining variables, they are useful to provide some basic demographic information on the victims and related members of their families.

Since this report is not the first of its kind on “honor killing” as the extreme form of violence against women in Palestine, it benefits from the available literature, which provides useful data and analysis of the attitudes and practices of the official and unofficial parties involved in dealing with domestic violence and “honor killing.” Therefore, we deemed it unwise to replicate the research and judged it sufficient to hold three focus group discussions, which were conducted with the Al-Muntada representatives of member organizations and centers, criminal detective officers from Ramallah District, PLC members and social workers from the PNA Ministry of Social Affairs from various districts of the West Bank.

Four female field workers were appointed to collect data; three of them were responsible to collect data on cases in the West Bank, divided into Southern, Central, and Northern regions, and the fourth field worker was responsible for the Gaza Strip. The first step in data collection was to contact women's organizations and centers, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Police headquarters to gather basic information on the “honor killing” incidents, which occurred between 2004 and 2006, including name, date, location, reason and way of murder. The collected data was compared with the 13 cases made available from WCLAC to eliminate the already documented cases.

Difficulties facing data collection placed limitations on the analysis. To compile a profile on the girls and women killed between 2004 and 2006, the fieldworkers were expected to interview a family member, preferably a female, in order to fill in the questionnaire for all the cases they found in their respective regions. However, this turned out to be a mission too ambitious, considering the difficulties and intricacies involved in making appointments, reaching the families and finding a contact or intermediary person within the time and funding limits of the project.

Therefore, we had to be satisfied with preliminary basic information on all the cases and to assign three cases for each fieldworker to apply the questionnaire to and present the information in a report form.

Even with this compromise, data collection was not an easy task for the fieldworkers. It was complicated and time-consuming because it dealt with a socially and culturally sensitive issue, if not considered almost a taboo. In all regions, fieldworkers had no choice but to refer to their own acquaintances and contacts for assistance to reach primary sources for data collection. Not having enough experience in data collection, some of the fieldworkers had to pressure interviewees to squeeze out information from them.

The areas which presented most obstacles were the Southern region of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the former region, the field worker faced obstacles from the community and objection from her own family. She reported: “The subject is very sensitive and the community refused cooperating with us. Our families are worried about us getting into danger; they said: ‘if they killed their own daughters would they care not to harm you? It is enough what they are going through; don't add to their suffering’.” For a long while, the field worker was unable to collect more than the basic data. With some encouragement and guidance from the research project coordinator, she succeeded in documenting three cases; however, data collected on them was superficial and weak.

In Gaza Strip, the fieldworker had extreme difficulties in collecting even basic data. The women's organizations and centers do not have any data because they do not engage in documentation or follow-up on the issue of “honor killing” as their counterparts do in the West Bank. Human rights organizations also have insufficient data, which was found to be contradictory in certain cases. What is more important is that the fieldworker could not reach any of the families; she was advised not to approach them, nor could she find intermediaries who would agree to accompany her to visit them. In Gaza, the field worker reported that the subject of “honor killing” is highly sensitive and almost a taboo

issue. With the existing political divisions and internal fighting, impacting the social and cultural aspects of Palestinian life, “honor killing” is considered a marginal concern. As a result she had to rely on second hand sources, such as acquaintances and neighbors of the victims, and on the little data available at the human rights organizations and the public prosecutor. She also had to make several appointments with the same police officer, for instance, and the kind of information she got was not substantial.

Considering similar difficulties involved in researching an issue as sensitive as “honor killing,” WCLAC case documentations, which were used in the analysis, show there were enormous efforts invested in collecting them. However, the documentations did not follow a standardized and systematic method for data collection, which lacked enough consistency to allow the analysis to come up with concrete patterns. Still, generally speaking, each case on its own was rich enough to give indications of the status of women's killing.

5- Data Analysis

5.1. Profile of Victims

Data collected from the field and from the case documentations available at WCLAC provide a total of 48 cases of girls and women killed between 2004 and 2006. The youngest was 12 years old and the oldest was 85. Of the 48 cases there were 32 cases officially documented as “honor killing” for the same period; in the rest of the cases, the victims were killed for reasons that are indirectly related, partly or largely, to their gender. In the discussion below, reference is made to the 32 cases that are clearly recorded as “honor killing” cases.

Religion: Two of the 32 victims were Christian and the rest were Muslim. This is not a surprising finding if we consider the ratio of Christians to Muslims in population.

Age: The ages of the victims ranged between 15 and 55, distributed as follows:

<u>Age in Years</u>	<u>Number of Victims</u>
15 years	1
17 years	1
18-19 years	6
21-28 years	15
30-35 years	5
40- 45 years	2
50+ years	2

Total	32

As can be seen from the age distribution above, the majority of the victims were in their teens and twenties, two of them were children and two were above 50.

Marital Status: Of a total of 32 victims, 14 were unmarried, 8 married, 6 divorced, 2 widowed, and for two sisters from the Gaza Strip, their marital status was undocumented. That the largest number of victims of “honor killing” were unmarried, indicates that single women are perceived as the most dangerous threat to social order.

Regional Location: Half of the victims came from the Gaza Strip and the other half from the West Bank, distributed into 6 from the Northern District, 5 from the Central District including Jerusalem, and 5 from the Southern District. The number of “honor killings” in Gaza Strip in comparison to that in the West Bank requires attention, considering the distribution of population in the two regions. It is not possible here to interpret such a finding since the data collected from Gaza Strip was limited. Generally speaking however, we note that the social, economic and political conditions of the Gaza Strip are more highly complex and harsher if compared to those of the West Bank, which partly explains the larger number of victims in Gaza.

Locality: Of a total of 32 victims, 15 came from villages, 9 from refugee camps and 8 from cities. As can be seen the largest number of victims, which represents almost half of the total, came from villages.

Although refugee camps are stereotyped as more backward socially and culturally than cities, the findings here do not support this perception if “honor killing” is considered an indicator of socio-cultural awareness and attitudes.

Education: Two of the victims from the West Bank were university students, one held a diploma and seven reached secondary education (grade 10 or 11), but they had not finished 12th grade, four had elementary education and two preparatory. Again due to the limited data from Gaza Strip, there was no information on the education level of the victims, except for three cases two of whom were school girls and one a first-year university student.

Paid Work: Of the 32 victims, only four from the West Bank were engaged in paid work (in secretarial and nursery teaching professions) and two were students, while the rest were either housewives or unemployed.

Family Size and Composition: The largest majority of the victims came from nuclear families; only four of them lived in extended families. In one case the victim's husband and his father had polygamous marriages and in another case the husband had two wives but they were living separately. On the size of the family, the data had information on 21 cases out of 32: Eight of the 21 victims came from large families (between 10 and 14 members), six came from a family of 7-9 members, and one from a family of 6 members. Five victims of 21 were married and had left children behind; one had 6 children, one had 5 children and 3 each had 4 children.

A few remarks can be made on the above profile of the victims: Regionally, there is a disproportionate distribution of “honor killings” between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip: Victims generally came from either large families or above average the Palestinian household-size; they had relatively a low level of education and the majority were not engaged in paid labor. Although these characteristics cannot be used to make conclusive remarks on the status of the girls and women victimized by “honor killing,” they provide indications of their subordinate social status.

It is inevitable for future documentation and data collection to take into consideration demographic and socio-economic conditions of the victims and their families, as they can be useful indicators of who were those women that got killed and why does women's killing perpetuate.

5.2. Method of Killing

The victimized girls and women were killed in various ways including strangling, hanging with a rope, shooting, poisoning (using chemical water or chemical pesticides), stabbing and beating violently with a metal instrument or a heavy rock. The ways most commonly used were strangling (with the hands or with a rope or with a belt) and shooting. Out of the 32 cases, 9 victims were strangled, 7 shot, 5 poisoned, 3 hanged, 2 stabbed, 2 beaten with heavy metal, 2 beaten violently and 2 undocumented. In one of the cases, the perpetrators were not satisfied with beating the victim to death; they dragged her corpse to the dump site at the top of the mountain, tied it to tires, burnt it and let it slide with the dump.

5.3. Perpetrators

Out of the 32 cases, brothers were the killers in 17 cases, fathers in 5 cases, brothers and other paternal relatives in 3 cases, fathers and paternal relatives in 2 cases, paternal relatives in 3 cases and an unknown perpetrator in one case. The figures show clearly that brothers seem to take the primary responsibility of “cleansing their honor from shame.”

However, in some cases the perpetrator who commits the crime is not necessarily the one who bears responsibility for it. Some cases show that more than one person participated in the killing, yet the family/the males who decided on the murder and planned it also agreed on who should bear the responsibility and report to the police. In the focus group discussion with the Criminal Detective Personnel, they gave an example of a girl who was killed on the basis of “honor” and the family made her 14-year old brother bear the responsibility for the murder. In another case, the brothers were the actual perpetrators and their old father claimed responsibility for the murder.

The data revealed another finding: Irrelevant whether the victim was married or single, her natal family members were responsible for her murder; there was no one case among the 8 married victims where the husband or his family participated in the murder. However, there is a possibility that following the murder, a conflict may arise between the victim's natal family and her husband and in-laws. For instance, one of the victims, a pregnant woman, was killed by her brother because her husband accused her of bearing a child that was not his own. After the DNA test had shown the husband was the actual father, his family filed a case against his wife's family for killing "their" child!

Finally, the data did not show any victim killed by a female immediate relative. However, this is not impossible; the literature on domestic violence against women in Palestine reported one case of a mother who killed her daughter and another case of a sister who killed her sister.

5.4. Honorable, Dishonorable Conduct

The literature on "honor crimes" addresses the notion of "honor," often referred to as "family honor" or "male honor." It has been shown that family honor is practically another term for male honor, while female honor does not seem to exist.

Females embody male honor in their social and sexual behavior. "Codes of honor serve to construct not only what it means to be a woman, but also what it means to be a man, and hence are central to social meanings of gender. Honor is intrinsically linked to norms of behavior for both sexes and is predicated upon patriarchal notions of ownership and control of women's bodies."
(Sen in Welchman and Hossan, 2005:48)

Men are expected to protect family/male honor from "shame" and women are expected to uphold honor by conforming to social norms and traditions that are set to maintain it; women's responsibility is also to make sure that other females conform to honor codes. Recently, there have been attempts to review the notion of "honor." For instance, criticism of

women's activities in the United Kingdom and Pakistan was directed at the notion of “honor crimes” because the notion of “honor” is designated as an attribute to males embodied in women's behavior. Touma-Sliman explains that this understanding of the notion gives legitimacy to all forms of social regulation of women's behavior and to violence committed against them. Other alternatives suggest that domestic violence should be seen as holding shame rather than honor; yet others would rather consider it “attaching to women as well as to men as designating qualities of respect, tolerance and inclusivity (inclusion).” (Ibid:7)

What is of significance, however, is that, “Honor codes are not solely about individual men controlling the lives of individual women. They are about community norms, social policing and collective decisions, and acts of punishment.” (Ibid{10})

In Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities of North India the notion of “honor” is termed izzat. “In general, it is measured by the degree of respect shown by others...individual families can gain or lose 'honour' through money and power. But since all families do not have money or power, other aspects are also critical.” (Chakravarti in Welchman and Hossan, 2005:310)

Holding on to the notion of “honor” is a collective and not an individual matter, which either serves maintaining wealth and power or attempting to gain status and power. The individual status or power is linked to the family, clan, tribe or the community at large; in order to survive, individuals have to conform to and promote the enforcement of social norms and “honor” codes that define what is considered to be “honorable” or “dishonorable” conduct. The data provides illustrative examples.

The interviews conducted with relatives of the victims, members of the community and detective police reveal their perceptions of whether the victim, the perpetrator and the partner in the sexual relation (where relevant) conform to “honor codes,” and so they reflect what they consider as an “honorable” or a “dishonorable” conduct.

According to the interviewees, females are expected to be nice and respectful, to help others and to observe their social duties. The victims were thus described as such: “She was respectful.” “She was nice to those who visited her.” “She is a lovely and genuine person; she never hesitated to help others.” “She observed all her social obligations; she went to all funerals and weddings in the village.” These views were given to support the victim in a defensive attempt to show that she was wrongly accused of committing a “wrongful dishonorable” act.

The victims were also defensively described as having strong personalities and as being courageous and daring: “She had a strong and courageous personality. Nothing broke her.” “She had a strong character. Nothing scared her.” “She was nice, kind and human, with a strong personality like men.” Personality features of this kind are normally attributed to males as expressed in the last quote, “with a strong personality like men.” In unusual cases, a strong personality is attributed to females when their character does not conform to the normative feminine character, in order to praise their behavior or to criticize it. Although the preceding quotes were expressed in support of the victim, they do imply their non-conformity to the attributes socially ascribed to females.

Other interviewees expressed more clearly their critical views of the victims' behavior. It is not acceptable for women to have a loud voice or to be a problem-maker: “She was loud; you could hear her from the far end of the camp.” “She was a problem maker and moody but kind-hearted.” Smoking is another behavior that is considered unacceptable: “She used to smoke; some neighbors used to give her cigarettes and take advantage of her.” “She used to smoke in the university bathroom.” Women's mobility falls under scrutiny: “She liked to go out for walks.” “We never saw her go out with anyone; no one has ever taken her out.” “She had appointments outside the village.” She never gossiped about anybody; and she rarely went out.”

Rebelling against the existing norms and codes can be seen as a very dangerous act: “She was a rebel and did not allow anyone to interfere in her life; she wanted to go wherever she liked even without the approval

of her family.” “She rejected the norms and traditions prevailing in the society. For a female, to have a room to herself, or to ask to have a room on her own, was seen as extremely strange: “She even had her own room in the house.” “She wanted a room in the house to herself.”

Accusing the victims of “sexual misconduct” was reflected harshly in the views: “She and the girls in her family are sexual; that means they have a desire for men and sex.” “I think the girl looks for pleasure. I never liked to talk to her. When you look at her you feel she desires to have a sexual relation; her clothes, her gestures. At the same time she is naïve and anyone can easily trick her.” In contrast, in support of a victim's conformity to sexual norms, interviewees often referred to maintaining her virginity: “She had honor. Medical check up proved she was virgin.”

Dress codes also uphold notions of “honorable” or “shameful” behavior. “She used to wear a *hijab* and a *jilbab* and did not wear make-up or fashionable clothes except at home.” “She liked to wear fashionable clothes and make-up, but her clothes were decent; she did not wear sleeveless or open clothes.”

The above quotations reflect the interviewees’ judgment of the victim's behavior. The measures they used include personality traits, privacy, sexual conduct, smoking, mobility, dress code and reputation. Having a strong, liberal or rebellious character is perceived as “dishonorable conduct.” Females are not expected to be mobile beyond certain limits, which can be the house, the neighborhood or the place of residence. Nor it is acceptable for them to have privacy as they are not expected to have anything to hide; if they do, then it must be “dishonorable.” So going out and having one’s private room or asking to have one do not indicate “honorable conduct.” Dress code separates “honorable” from “dishonorable” behavior; wearing a hijab and a jilbab and not wearing make-up appeared to be more “honorable” than wearing usual clothes that are still “decent.” Finally, maintaining virginity is perceived as an indicator of “honorable conduct,” while looks and gestures reflecting sexual desire are viewed as “dishonorable.”

The measures used for judging men's conduct differ from those used to measure women's conduct, except in the case of sexual conduct. Men's "dishonorable" behavior was perceived as related to bad reputation and drug dealing: "He has a bad reputation. All the people gossip about him." "He must be a drug dealer." In one case the victim's husband was attacked for not having the "honorable" attitude or look expected of men. "Her husband is weak; he is sick and had been injured in the hand (he has a disability). He is not attractive." As for men's sexual behavior, interviewees expressed views similar to their views of women, however, insinuated to women as the instigators of "dishonorable" behavior of men. "I do not trust this man and consider him a person with a dirty reputation. His looks attract women." "People like him are not satisfied with their wives, and she (the victim) also gave them the chance to do so."

Fulfilling religious duties was one criterion used in measuring "honorable acts." In some cases reference to religiosity appeared strongly in the interviewees' perceptions of men who were accused of being involved in "sexual misconduct." Religiosity is identified as praying, fasting and going to the mosque: "He used to pray and fast every Monday and Thursday and was planning to join the Men of Da'wa." "He and his family are corrupt. His father is old and corrupt. His daughters are spinsters; no one wants to marry them. He is rude and does not pray. I never see him at the mosque." Note that the final quotation refers to the daughters as "spinsters," a negative term for old unmarried women, because of their father's and brothers' "dishonorable" behavior. In one case, a husband killed his wife and all the indicators showed that the murder was intended. However, to reconcile with his in-laws he had to prove that he unintentionally murdered his wife. The mosque was the best place that could give his word credibility, so he went there with his male relatives and made an oath that he was telling the truth.

Mothers are always criticized and judged by the community for their daughters' "wrong doing," while fathers are rarely accused or blamed. Whether the victim is married living with her husband or she is single living with her family, blame is generally placed on her natal family for not raising her properly. Mothers are the first to blame for not playing

their motherly role properly in supervising their daughters to ensure they abide by “honor codes;” in addition, other adult females bear harshly the impact of the events surrounding the incident of killing.

The social construction of gender is reflected by the interviewees' views and judgments presented above. Praise or criticism of the “honorable” behavior of females is related to their social role and sexuality, while that of males is related to their sexuality as well as to their presence in public. Neither women nor men escape being criticized and judged by the community if they do not conform to the social norms and codes. However, women are more harshly criticized and they are usually seen as agents of “dishonorable” acts.

5.5. Qualitative Analysis of Cases: Issues for Consideration

This section presents an analysis of qualitative data on cases of women’s killing, based on a thorough reading of WCLAC documentation of ten cases and of the documentation of 10 other cases compiled by the Al-Muntada fieldworkers for the purpose of the report. In respect to the interviewees’ desire to remain anonymous and to protect the privacy of the victims and their families, no reference is made to the names of people or their place of residence when quotations are extracted from the interviews or a short narrative of the case is used.

5.5.1. Prevalence of ‘Honor Killing’

It is not easy to conclude how widely spread or how frequently women's killings (including “honor killings”) occur because of the absence of adequate official statistics and due, to a certain degree, of inadequacy in reporting the real causes of female deaths. However, the data available presents an initial indication of its prevalence.

The 32 cases of “honor killings” we were able to document between 2004 and 2006 are distributed into 18 cases in 2006, 11 cases in 2005 and one case in 2004; two of the cases lacked the exact date, but they occurred in the same period. In addition, there were 8 occurrences of women's killing that were not claimed on the basis of “honor,” yet in the

statements they reported to the police the perpetrators insinuate connection to a social or sexual “misconduct” of the victims. As shown in the table below, five of those killings happened in 2006 and three in 2005. Finally, there were eight cases of women, five of them elderly, who were killed between 2004 and 2006 that were clearly identified as criminal acts not related to “honor.”

Year	No. of Women	Reason for Killing
2006	1	Saniyya, 12 years old, was raped and killed by the rapist, a boy of 16 years old.
2005	1	Sara was killed by her nephews, on the basis of “honor killing” to get a reduced sentence. Strong indications suggest inheritance as the real reason for the killing.
2006	2	Salma and her daughter, who was 7 months pregnant, were killed with several bullet shots each, by the woman's nephew. Contradictory information was given by Human Rights Organizations and the Police; the former said they are “honor killings,” and the latter said family conflicts.
2005	1	Muneera was stabbed with a knife by her husband, who was a drug addict and a wife-batterer. He claimed having suspicions about his wife's social and sexual conduct. He did not admit killing her on the basis of “honor.”
2006	1	Susan was killed by her husband who did not give the real reason. There were implications that her behavior and conduct were socially and ethically unacceptable.
2005	1	Suhaila was killed in her bed by her husband. The case was documented as a planned deliberate crime. Initial investigations showed there was an ambiguous side to the story, but further investigations would cause more serious problems so “orders from above” halted further investigation.

2006	1	Suha was killed by her alcoholic husband who beat her violently until she passed away. He reported he suspected she had a relation with a man and she did not know how to cook. Her husband threatened to kill her if she uncovered a secret, which she had never revealed.
Unknown	2	Sameera and her daughter were killed by her husband. The reason given, though not confirmed, was the husband's hatred for his wife and his insistence to get money from her, which she refused to give.
2006	1	Maha was stabbed with a knife by her husband who was a drug addict in the presence of their children.
2004-2005	5	Five elderly women, one was 85 years old, living alone, were killed either to steal their money and jewelry, or for a conflict on property. In one case, the motive behind the murder was unknown.
Total	16	N.B. All names in this table are pseudo names.

The above listing of cases of women's killing indicates that the murder of girls and women, even when it is admitted a deliberate intent crime, it is often justified partly by the claim that the victims had violated the socially and culturally accepted morals and behaviors. This justification is made to gain familial and social support or sympathy for their criminal act. On the other hand, women appear to be the victims of the privileges granted socially, culturally and legally to men, which allow them to perceive of girls and women as weaker and as lower in status than they are. Being as young as 12 years of age, the girl child who was subject to rape could neither defend herself, nor was she aware of the act of rape or of what it entails; the rapist, on the other hand, who was still underage, must have felt powerful not only to rape the girl but also to kill her. The elderly women, one of whom was 85 years old, living alone, were also perceived as “socially unprotected by males” and weak enough to be attacked and murdered.

If we exclude the eight cases that were officially recorded as criminal murders unrelated to “cleansing family/male honor,” we end up with a total of 23 incidents of women's killings occurring in 2006 and 14 in 2005, while the number of cases for the year 2004 stays minimal, which indicates a higher rate of killings in 2006 compared to 2005. As indicated earlier, the AHDR report gave an estimate of 20 “honor killings” and 15 attempted “honor killings” for a nine-month period (between May 2004 and March 2005). Apparently the data collected for this study for the year 2004 is inadequate. Variations in the figures point to the difficulty in acquiring exact figures that could indicate the actual frequency of the crime.

“Honor killing” is on the rise, the data presented above indicates; the cases registered officially as “honor killings” increased from 14 to 23 within a period of one year. This increase in “honor killings” could be interpreted in various ways. For one thing, increasing activism of women's and human rights organizations to end violence against girls and women brought up the issue to the surface and engaged the public in debating it. Another possible reason is the increasing attention given to it by the police. Consequently both possible changes led to an increase in the reporting of the cases. It is also possible that “honor killings” represent a conflict in attitudes between those who challenge the longstanding and firmly established traditions and norms and those who seek to maintain them and resist the change that would disturb the existing social order.

Lack of legal protection of women's and girls' rights against violence and “honor” killing, particularly their basic right to live and enjoy personal safety, is a significant reason for the increase in “honor crimes.” The detective officers we interviewed stressed this fact: “Our problem lies in the laws and not in the application of the laws; in the West Bank we apply the Jordanian penal code issued in 1960. Indeed, we do not have laws that deal with violence against women,” a detective officer said. Although the Jordanian Penal Code (JPC) was amended, the PNA still enforces the original version of 1960, which includes the following articles:

Article 340 of the Jordanian Penal Code (law number 16 of 1960) grants exemption from prosecution or reduced penalty for husbands or

male blood relatives who kill or assault their wives or female relatives on the grounds of “family honor.”

Article 308 of the same law provides for dropping legal proceedings against a rapist who marries his victim.

Articles 285 and 286 of the same law stipulate that if a girl wants to file a complaint for violence or abuse, the complaint must be filed by a male relative.

Only in the case of adultery and incest can women file a complaint or a case against their abusers, the police officers interviewed explained.

These legal provisions do not provide women with any legal protection, and when they are enacted they favor men. Gender-based discrimination in the legal status of men and women allows and even encourages female killings. Whether the actual female killing is related or unrelated to “honor,” it can be claimed by the perpetrator as “honor killing” and his claim is always taken at face value. Furthermore, once the perpetrator claims he committed an “honor killing,” detective investigations get halted and the case is transferred to the public prosecution for judicial procedures.

The privileges the JPC grants to men at the disadvantage of women, coupled with the community support men get, makes female killing an easy act that is not considered criminal. This allows us to conclude that the issue is not an issue of “honor killing,” rather it is an issue of female killing, where male power control is exercised over females in the name of “honor.” If there were laws to protect women's right to live and their personal safety from violence, the decision to kill them in the name of “honor” would not be as easy.

A case provides an example of two sisters who were killed by their brother on the claimed basis of “honor.” Since the victims resided in the suburbs of Jerusalem, which is outside the jurisdiction of the PNA, the brother and the parents too had to be subject to Israeli law. The claim of killing in the name of “honor” was disregarded and the rule of law

was exercised giving the perpetrator a lifetime sentence. This is not to say that the Israeli occupation protects women's rights, but to stress that when women's and men's basic human right to personal safety is protected by the law, when the perpetrators take the penalty they deserve, and when proper investigation of a criminal act is conducted, it deters people from taking the law into their hands. Laws alone will not be sufficient as long as the patriarchal ideology of male and elderly power is in control and as long as the informal structures, such as village and tribal notables, maintain power to exercise social policing.

5.5.2. Suspected Female Deaths

The 32 analyzed cases represent the killing of females on the claimed basis of “staining family/male honor.” If we consider this number in addition to the number cited in the ADHR report (20 cases of “honor killing”), the issue of “honor killing” can be considered alarming. However, it becomes more alarming if suspected female deaths, reported as death due to “fate” or suicide, are counted in.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian reviewed the death cases reported in the files of the Attorney General and found that the number of female death cases reported as deaths due to “fate” in the years 1996, 1997, and 1998 totaled 60, 74, and 100 respectively. The reasons recorded for those death cases included poisoning, burning, falling from altitude, unintentional cause, electrocution and suicidal. She also found that out of a total of 234 female deaths, 21 cases were suicidal and 197 had no documented cause. These figures indicate there was an increase in the cases reported as death due to “fate” in the period between 1996 and 1998 (Ibid {4}: 57-58) In the same study, she discusses the fear perceived by females of being killed by their families if abuse is disclosed or if they violated what is traditionally assumed as appropriate sexual conduct. The data subject to analysis in this report supports her findings.

A 19-year old university student in Gaza Strip was hospitalized due to poisoning two days after she was kidnapped and remained absent from home for two days. However, no in-depth investigation was conducted by the police. The limited investigation, according to the detective police

officer, could not reveal whether the victim took poison in an attempt to commit suicide, she was forced to take it, or it was put in her food or drink. He explained her family did not want police to carry out further investigation; they insisted on reporting her death due to poisoning. “We cannot force an “honor killing” investigation on them if they refuse to admit it or report it as an 'honor killing' case,” the officer added. The case was closed on the basis of death due to poisoning. There was no official information on what happened to the girl after she was kidnapped. However, since the act of kidnapping involves violence, the possibility that she was sexually abused or raped is higher than assuming she committed a “disgraceful” act. She probably felt her absence from home would definitely make her family doubt that she had violated their “honor” and fearing they would kill her if the abuse or her own act was disclosed, she took poison to end her life. It is also possible that her family discovered what happened during her absence from home and, considering it “shameful,” they forced her to take the poison or poisoned her. The fact that the family refused to conduct further investigation on the case makes it unlikely to consider the girl's death as “fate.”

The impact of the procedures of handling the case is seriously dangerous. The detective police respected the desire of the family and did not carry out further investigation; whether the girl was actually killed, committed suicide or died by misadventure remains unknown. This position of the detective police is dangerous because it encourages the killing of females since the perpetrators know beforehand they could report the death as a result of “fate” without being criminally liable. The impact of such procedures is even more serious than that of the JPC, which allows the perpetrator to benefit from a reduced sentence in the case of “honor killing.” It is worth noting that both decisions -- the family's decision to insist on reporting the death due to “fate” and refuse further investigation on the case, and the decision of the detective police to respect the family's wish -- were gender-based decisions. It is very unlikely that a family would not be curious to find out who the perpetrator was or what caused the poisoning if the victim was a male family member, unless he had committed suicide and they wanted to avoid social pressure or a scandalous situation. On the other hand, it is also most unlikely for the police detectives not to carry out further investigations to try to uncover the real cause of the poisoning or the perpetrator if they had doubts regarding his death.

5.5.3. 'Honor' as Cover for Killing

In contrast with the preceding case, sometimes the perpetrator claims he committed an “honor killing” when the actual reason was unrelated to “honor,” like the case of a married woman who was killed by her brother and nephews. Several interviewees explained that her brother and nephews had a conflict with her over land property. Her sister reported: “The reason for her murder is land property and not honor.” Apparently what “enraged” the brother in particular, who was the main instigator in killing her, is that she and another sister of hers made the inheritance issue public. “She and her sister in Jordan posted an announcement in the mosque stating they would not allow the selling of any piece of the land without their consent and without them getting their shares in it.” Another relative mentioned that her brother was ready to kill any of his sisters if they dared to ask for their shares in the inheritance; according to this interviewee, when the brother was asked what he would do in case his sisters ask for their shares in the land, he stated, “it will be one bullet that will cost one piaster (less than an Israeli shekel).”

Although rumors were spread out about the victim's sexual misconduct, her having an affair and even about her having several sexual relations, most of those interviewed doubted the rumors. Yet the investigation procedures on the case were halted when the perpetrators claimed the murder was committed on the basis of “honor.” The detective who investigated the case clarified: “When the defendant comes and claims committing an honor killing, we do not do extensive investigation; we leave the case to the court.” Here, “honor killing” is considered a family affair, and the police are not supposed to interfere in a family's private domain.

However, what is obvious in this particular case is that the brother wanted to get rid of his sister who dared to challenge his masculine power. She did not only ask for her inheritance but also dared to make the issue public, causing him a scandal and interrupting his plans to sell the land. It is socially and culturally unacceptable for women to show courage and a strong personality, let alone daring to appear powerful in the public domain. Therefore, the most effective weapon to fight the victim

back into her subordinate status was to accuse her of “dishonorable behavior” to justify getting her killed. Killing her in the name of “honor” is justifiable and its penalty is mitigated by the effective law. The word of the perpetrator was taken for granted and he benefited from the law, which allowed him to get away with his act without criminal liability.

5.5.4. Killing of Women: Family/ Male Affair

As shown in the foregoing discussion, the law and the legal procedures protect the right of family/male to claim the reason for the death of their female relatives as they see fit. These conditions allow the family/male members to consider killing of women a family affair, “honor” killings inclusive.

In all the cases under study, the act of women’s killing was planned and executed by the male members of the family, primarily including fathers, paternal uncles and paternal nephews, while female members were most often not consulted or instructed not to interfere. Yet at the same time, some female family members were involved in various degrees, depending on their relation to the perpetrator, which makes the act of women’s killing look like a family affair. In one case, a paternal aunt played a primary role in instigating the father to kill his daughter. Mothers were generally against the killing and mentioned they had no say so in the decision or they were not allowed to interfere.

The mother was in favor of killing her daughter only in two cases. One mother said: “She deserves what happened to her; she has committed a wrong doing that cannot be forgiven. She did not appreciate the confidence I had in her.” Often mothers of the victims were made responsible for the alleged “wrong doing” of the victims that they feel pressured to support the killing of their own children or even to take part in it. In one case, the father came into the room “raging with fury” and told his wife: “If you know what happened you will have a heart attack... Get her [the victim] out, I want to run her over with the car.” The mother suggested: “Kill her with poison.”

Under the banner of “family honor”, it is not important who commits the murder or who claims it, when it takes place. Usually there is cooperation among the family male members and often the old exercise their power over the young. In this respect, the police gave an example of a family who killed their daughter and decided that her 14-year old brother was the one to claim responsibility for the killing. Suspecting a child of 14 could carry out a criminal act as such or bear the consequences of an act he never committed, the police decided to conduct further investigations to find who the actual killer was.

To benefit from every possible privilege the law or the traditions grant them, the perpetrators plan carefully the execution of women’s killing and create a whole scenario that involves various family members. In one instance a widowed woman was killed by her brothers. The father and the brothers planned the killing and the brothers executed it. They all agreed the father would claim responsibility for the murder because the brothers have families to provide for and could not afford being put in jail. If the father claimed responsibility for the killing he would be released on bail due to his old age, over 70. All the relatives from the extended family were required to cooperate in support of the father; they had to contribute a share to collect the sum of money needed to release him on bail. Women and children also were given a role to play. The wives of the three brothers had to attend the court session and witness that their husbands were not involved in the murder; the victim’s children were also to attend the court session to cry over being left alone without their parents and without someone to take care of them and provide for them, in case their grandfather was sentenced for imprisonment.

Moreover, the cases under study indicate that the killing of women, particularly on the basis of “honor,” is normally left subject to the jurisdiction of the family/males, who believe it is their right to deal with the “sexual violation” of their female members as they see fit and that their duty is to supervise, control and redress their behavior in order to protect “family/male honor.” In one case, a father kept repeating: “I killed my daughter with my own hands. I wiped off the shame and cleansed myself... A father has the right to kill his daughter; it is no problem.” Female members of the family are seen as the family’s “property” and

no outsider is entitled to interfere with how they treat them. In one of the cases, the victim's brother and her nephews had attacked her in her own house and had harshly beaten her a week before they killed her. When some mediators tried to interfere in her favor, her brother's response was: "She is our sister and we are free to do whatever we like with her."

In their reports to the police, the father and /or the brothers often claim they took the decision of killing their daughter or sister after having questioned her. Based on rumors and gossip, suspicion or evidence that the victim's sexual behavior was unacceptable, they either actually question her or claim they have done so. What exactly happens during the actual or the claimed family investigation remains unknown. The police rarely get a true report of it and what information people get is what the (male) members of the family reveal. Almost always the investigation happens in a closed threatening environment using physical violence, which forces the girl or the woman being investigated to give information she probably thinks would rescue her, but it hardly ever does. In one case, the victim was found pregnant out of wedlock. When her brothers questioned her to find out who she was involved with, she threw out the name of a person that first came to her mind. After she was buried, the police got a report suspecting her death was normal. The police investigation uncovered the information she gave to her brothers when they questioned her was incorrect. In another case, the father submitted a letter to the police claiming his daughter wrote it when he and her uncles questioned her before he killed her. The letter of confession, which the detective police read to the fieldworker, stated that:

"The girl (18 years old) got to know a man through the phone. He turned out to be an Israeli soldier of Bedouin origin. She tried to stop contacting him by calling number 100 for help. The Israeli police answered her calls, and one time someone took advantage of her, telling her that he was an Israeli soldier, and he threatened to arrest her family if she did not meet him. He agreed with her to meet her on a highway behind the village. When she met him he took her to a hotel in Jerusalem and told her that he was an Arab and a Muslim and that he wanted to marry her. Then he took her to a city in Israel and left her with

some of his acquaintances until he visited his family to arrange for their marriage. Later, she got news that he died in an accident. She did not know what to do. She stayed with those people until she had a chance to inform her family of where she was.” The letter also stated that she was married Urfi (traditional unofficial marriage), but had no document on her.

Although the narrative outlined above sounds wobbly, it was taken at face value. One would question how the girl, who was drawn out of school before she had finished 5th grade could have written the letter of confession. It is possible that one of the relatives involved in the killing had written it and forced the girl either to sign it or copy it. Irrespective of what really happened, in such a situation the police does not interfere or question the perpetrators’ claim. On the above case, the detective police commented: “We do not know the truth, but according to her (the victim’s) report he promised to marry her.” The father’s word was taken for granted that the girl had actually written the letter, and what the letter stated was true. Although there were rumors about the father and the grandfather being involved in drug dealing and that the girl was taken as a hostage until they pay the dealers what they owe them, this side of the story was not investigated because the father claimed killing his daughter on the basis of “honor.”

The above cases show that women’s killing under the banner of “honor killing” is considered a “family affair.” The male members of the family in particular are in total control of the life of the female members. They take the right to judge their behavior, to accuse them, to question them, to sentence them to death and to execute their murder. No outsider, even the police who represent the authority, is allowed to interfere in their private domain. This attitude is reinforced and legitimized by the reaction of the police and other outsiders who are reluctant to interfere in the family’s affair or intrude into their private space.

5.5.5. Family, Community Pressure

Family and community pressure seem to play an important role in enforcing the killing of females in the name of “honor.” Immediate male relatives often do not have the free choice to kill or not to

kill their daughter or sister when they or others accuse her of “disgracing family honor.” Family and community members take the right to judge others' behavior, particularly female behavior, and ensure they conform to “honor codes.” Therefore, sometimes immediate male relatives, particularly fathers as our data shows, fall under enormous pressure from other more powerful relatives and force them to kill their daughter or sister “to cleanse the shame she brought to (the extended) family honor.”

In one case, the father was pressured primarily by his older brother and by his sister to kill his daughter because she attempted to elope with her boyfriend. They kept visiting the father to push him to kill his daughter, saying: “Kill her and get rid of her.” In another instance, the grandfather of a 19-year old victim was the main force pressuring the father to execute the murder of his daughter. At one point, he threatened him saying: “If you do not kill her, I will do.” Another time, he called him on the phone saying: “Haven't you finished it yet, Ya Hamel (You tramp, having no morals, disregarding your duties)? Such a statement is an attack on the father's masculinity and is enough to pressure him to be up to his responsibility towards “family honor.”

When rumors get spread out in the community around a girl's or a woman's “sexual misconduct,” relatives and community members do not hesitate to question her immediate relatives about the truth behind the rumors, which puts fathers and brothers under severe pressure. In one instance, the victim's father had several phone calls from relatives living within and outside the village asking him about what happened. A relative of his noted: “At work, people kept asking, 'what did your daughter do? You have scandalized us in the area. Don't you know how to discipline her?’” Moreover, some of the relatives notified the father he should either kill his daughter or take his family and leave the country. The victim's sisters stressed how their father was under enormous pressure: “What happened is unfair. Our society is corrupt. Each tells a different story... My father told her I will support you to the end and will not abandon you. I do not know why he changed his mind and killed her...My father did not want to kill her; it is probably the social pressure (that made him change his mind), the society has no mercy.”

In one case, the father who comes from a Christian family fell under double pressure. Gossip spread about Christians being more liberal, and so, as if for them crossing certain social boundaries is normal. A relative of the victim commented: “Most of those who gossiped are Muslim. Because if something unethical happens among us, Christians, we stay silent, so it became as if we have to prove that we are not loose.”

Social pressure is a two-way strategy adopted to justify women's killing in the name of “honor” and to obtain social support at the same time. In some cases, women's killing extends across the boundaries of being a family affair to become a community affair. Following the killing of a girl, her grandfather who seemed to have power in the village had gathered the notables in the Diwan (a community meeting place) and announced the girl's killing. In addressing them, he said: “We killed the girl because of honor. This is our honor and the honor of all the people in the village. We all have to go to the court and release them (the father and the uncles) on a bail no matter how much it would cost.” By this statement, the grandfather turned “family honor” to a “village honor” and made it the responsibility of the whole community to support him and his sons, culturally and financially.

5.5.6. Marriage as Solution

Not all family members and community members support women's killing even when they believe there is evidence the victim did violate “honor codes.” Some interviewees raised voices in objection to women's killing. Some believe that killing a woman in the name of “honor” does not ever “wipe the shame off.” An interviewee commented: “Her children will always be reminded of their mother's wrongful act.” Some saw that religion and Shari'a (Islamic law) do not legitimize women's killing: “According to Shari'a, even if the father was conservative and was sure that his daughter committed adultery he is not entitled to kill her.” Some interviewees tried to give alternatives to women's killing in the name of honor: “I am against killing because there are other solutions. They can send her abroad and abandon her, but they should not kill her.” The following opinion of a detective officer diagnoses the issue of women's killing:

“The problem lies in the family, their lack of awareness, their lack of care, their ignorance and in the rotten traditions and norms. Even the educated practice such acts. Second, there are no institutions that meet with the families and care for them and look for the origins of the problem. Sexual relations are a taboo and so they are not discussed at home. So, when children face problems as such there is no one to guide them. Rarely do families sit with their sons or daughters to educate them on these matters. Killing a girl is an unacceptable practice. When a wrong as such happens it should be solved with the least losses. If there were societies and institutions, if the law ruled, the problem would not reach the point of killing. If the criminal knows he will be questioned and subjected to the law such matters would not happen. Another reason is forced marriages. Sometimes they give a university girl in marriage to a ploughman. The catastrophe is that the girl is punished and at the end she gets killed according to the tribal norms and traditions while the criminal is free, roaming around. If justice rules the two should receive equal punishment because both committed a wrong doing. The best solution is to get the two married, especially if the girl is found pregnant, and put an end to the problem.”

As stated in the above quote, marriage in some cases is seen as an alternative to killing. However, the cases under study reveal that marriage is only theoretically an alternative solution to killing. The detective officer in the quote above was referring to the case of a widow who got pregnant and there were attempts to get her married to the man she had an affair with. In the arrangements for the marriage between the two parties, her father requested the suitors “something symbolic for his daughter as part of the marriage deal” as he said, but his request was rejected. He was told that his “daughter committed a wrongful act and she should bear the consequences.” Upon hearing this he got into “a fit of fury” and replied: “Fine, my daughter was wrong and she will bear the burden.” As a result of the failure of the deal among men and the revenge of her father who felt he should behave manly and “cleanse the shame that sullied his honor,” the woman lost her life.

In other instances, having found that the daughter was pregnant out of wedlock the family, represented by its male members, decided to get her

married to the person she was involved with; yet still she was killed. A detective officer gave an example of such cases: “I once investigated a case of a girl who was 17 years old and who got pregnant from a guy who was 22 years old. Their families got them married. They stayed married for a week and then male relatives, her uncles and paternal cousins, brought the girl by force from her husband’s house and threw her in a well. This is unfair, especially that the girl got married, so why would they kill her?”

Our data provides another example where a girl who was 17-year old was sexually abused by a 35-year old doctor and who married her urfi. When her family found out about the matter, they divorced her and got her married to her 18-year old cousin, holding all the traditional ceremonies usually held for a wedding. A week later, her uncle, her father and her cousins killed her. What satisfaction would such a procedure give the male relatives who commit such criminal acts is beyond comprehension.

5.5.7. Women, Girls Bear the Burden

In the case of the pregnant widow mentioned above, female relatives were both agents and victims of the act of killing. Bearing the responsibility of ensuring that women and girls in the family conform to “honor codes,” female relatives had to reveal the issue of the victim's pregnancy to their husbands; they knew that otherwise they would be blamed and most probably punished. The victim's mother suggested to the father poisoning their daughter instead of running her over. Although she possibly felt that poisoning could be a more merciful way of killing, it is more likely that she found herself obliged to participate in the arrangements of the killing in order to avoid the blame or other worse consequences.

In the case of the 17-year old girl who got sexually abused by a doctor, punishment fell on her stepmother who was accused of having knowledge of the girl's marriage and kept silent. As a result she was divorced when she was pregnant. After she gave birth, her husband and his family took the child from her considering her not trustworthy enough to raise the child. In two other cases, the mothers of the victims got divorced for not taking properly their motherly role. This shows that females in the family, particularly mothers, are the first to be blamed and bear the burden. On the other hand, fathers are blamed for not behaving manly and exercising

their power.

Even when a father is involved in the abuse, he escapes being punished and females still bear the consequences of his dishonorable act. The following case is an example:

A 17-year old girl was sexually abused by her father; the abuse lasted for four years and she ended up pregnant. When her pregnancy was revealed at the hospital, her father ran away and left her to pay the price. Several parties intervened. The hospital had to call the police for investigation. The District Governor interfered to find contacts to help her abort; he sent her to a social worker who found her a doctor that would accept to do the abortion. Her mother tried hard not to inform her brother of the actual reason for her hospitalization. However, the news of the girl's abortion reached the community, and her brother got the news from his paternal uncles and through other individuals who questioned him about what happened with his sister. He looked for his father to kill him but could not find him. He decided instead to kill his sister because she kept silent about her father's sexual abuse of her. The detective police officer mentioned that the girl's uncles did not regret what happened and seemed to have agreed to the killing of the girl. He explained, "as if there is a hidden agreement among them in the family to kill the girl. The father ran away and they killed the girl. Based on the investigation I conducted I gathered that everybody seemed to agree (on killing the girl)."

In such a case, a 17-year old girl undergoing sexual abuse by her father, who is supposed to protect and provide her with security, has undoubtedly affected her psychological and emotional state and overwhelmed her by fear. How could she disclose her father's sexual abuse of her when he threatened to kill one of her brothers if she did? How could she confide in anyone, when she knew nothing would rescue her from getting killed. Her uncle said she was afraid of disclosing the abuse because she knew they would kill her. How can she defend herself? She was totally unprotected. As a child she was sexually abused by her father and yet had to pay the price for his criminal act of violence as well as for his escape.

Children too, males and females, could not avoid bearing the consequences of women's killing; they are among the first to be subject to abuse. In one case the impact of the murder of a

divorced mother fell directly upon her eldest daughter. Following the murder of the mother, the father took back his three girls from their grandparents' custody to live with him and his new wife. The eldest daughter reported to the fieldworker she was abused physically and psychologically by her father and stepmother as if she is to bear the blame of her mother's wrong doing for her whole life. They beat her violently, forced her to do housework and care for the sheep and accused her of stealing. Her stepmother repeatedly abused her verbally: "Like mother like daughter."

While girls carry the burden of their mothers' "shameful" behavior, boys bear the burden of revenge. The 14-year old son of one of the victims expressed his feelings towards his mother's unjust killing and promised to revenge her. "What happened to my mother is embarrassing; she has not done anything wrong. I have never seen this man (his mother was accused of having an affair with) neither at day nor at night... We were all happy together and my father never raised his hand at my mother (in a gesture to beat her). All she wanted is her right to a share in the land... They refused to give her what she wanted and used this excuse (meaning the rumors dishonoring her). I felt hatred towards my uncles. I said when I grow up I will take revenge on them, on those who planned her killing. I started thinking: When I grow up and work, I will buy a gun and kill them with it... My brothers and I, we all said we will revenge when we grow up."

Most of the victims of "honor killing" suffered multiple abuses before their life was ended. Several cases show that girls and wives were physically and psychologically abused; some of them had their husbands got married to a second wife; others were divorced and were either left with children abandoned by their father or were deprived of their children. In one case, a married woman with four children was killed by her brother. The woman was raped and her father killed the rapist and was imprisoned. Her husband divorced her and took away her four children. As a result of being divorced and deprived of her children while in her early twenties, she suffered a psychological trauma. The way he mother described her behavior tells she must have suffered a depression. She stopped communicating with her family and tried to commit suicide

several times. Her mother claims she heard her telling her brother to help her end her life.

Examining the cases of women's killing not reported as “honor crimes” emphasizes further that the issue to be dealt with is not an issue of killing for “honor.” It is a matter of women getting killed as a result of living in a violent unhealthy family or conjugal environment.

In three cases, women were murdered by their husbands who were either alcoholic, on drugs or under the influence of both. One of the three women was a second wife. Under the influence of alcohol her husband killed her by beating her to death only one month following their marriage. She told her sister he threatened to kill her if she uncovered a secret which, fearing for her life, she had never revealed. In his affidavit to the police, he reported having doubts she had an extra-marital relationship. However, according to the police, they could not uncover the real reason for her murder.

The second woman was also stabbed with a knife by her husband, who was a drug addict and a wife-batterer. He claimed having suspicions about her social and sexual conduct. In one instance, he took her to the graveyard and beat her head against the floor trying to make her confirm his doubts. She often told her family he abused her physically and psychologically and she wanted to divorce him. Her father's response was that she should bear the consequences of her choice” “Isn't Ali the one you chose to marry. This is Ali.”

The third woman was killed in her bed by her husband. The case was documented as a planned deliberate crime. Initial investigations showed there was an ambiguous side to the crime. There were rumors about the husband being secretly involved in drug dealing and that his wife uncovered his secret, so he killed her to avoid trouble. However, having received “orders from above” to accept the perpetrator's report as it was, the detective police had to halt further investigations, which could cause more serious problems than the present crime.

The above three cases reveal husbands' violence against their wives. Those wives were vulnerable and subject to easy murder. Why would the family not take action when their daughter complains about her husband subjecting her to violent abuse because he is a drug addict? Why should she be punished for making a free choice in marriage? Why should a wife lose her life and the case of her death gets closed for the purpose of not raising potentially more complicated problems? What could be worse than a person losing his/her right to live?

6- Conclusion and Recommendations

The data showed a total of 32 cases of women's killing in the name of “honor,” primarily occurring in 2005 and 2006. There was a higher number of women's killing in Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. The largest numbers of the victims were in their teens and twenties, unmarried and came from the villages. Brothers of the victims were found to be the primary perpetrators, having committed the highest number of women's killings among the 32 cases.

The number of “honor killings” presented in this report indicates that “honor killing” is on the rise; the cases registered officially as “honor killings” rose from 14 to 23 within a period of one year.

The qualitative data revealed three significant factors contributing to the perpetuation of women's killing in the name of “honor”:

First, the absence of deterring laws to protect women against all forms of violence, including killing, and the absence of laws that penalize the abusers and perpetrators is one primary source for the perpetuation of this criminal practice of women's killing in the name of “honor.” The absence of the law and its rule was an issue raised by several parties including the detective police personnel and community members. The existing effective laws favor men at the expense of women. Once female murder is claimed as an “honor killing,” the perpetrator is legally granted mitigation of the criminal liability and gets a reduced sentence; he is also entitled to be released on a bail.

Second, halting police investigation procedures is another contributing factor. In the case of claiming the killing is for “honor,” the police halt investigation procedures. The perpetrator's claim of committing a murder in the name of “honor” is taken at face value and is sufficient to halt police investigation. Police are not allowed and are probably reluctant to impose further investigation to confirm or refute the claim reported by the perpetrator. Sometimes further investigation is put on hold either due to orders from higher authorities or to avoid raising “more serious” problems. Honoring the family's desire to close down the case of female death, the police do not investigate the actual cause of death even in case it was suspected. However, the police do interfere before or after the burial of a girl or a woman if they have doubts she was killed; yet the result would be the same.

The foregoing circumstances, which make “honor killing” an easy decision, encourage women's killing by using “honor” as a cover. Equally important, such legal and social environment places women's life under the authority of the family. No outsider, official or unofficial, interferes in their “private” affair. Male members of the family in particular are in total control of the life of the female members. They take upon themselves the right to judge their behavior, accuse them, question them, sentence them to death and to execute their murder.

Third, the notion of “honor” is viewed as a “collective” rather than an “individual” concern, which makes “preserving it or cleansing it from shame” responsibility of the community as manifested in social pressure. Killing a female family member in the name of “honor” is not an individual free choice; often male relatives and community members exercise pressure to enforce it. On the other hand, male family members exercise pressure on the extended family and the community to get their social and material support to clear themselves from the criminal act they committed in the name of “honor.”

Often before the murder of a female who is accused of “tarnishing family/male honor,” social agents, represented by tribal notables,

members of political factions, district governors or members of security forces interfere to redress the situation. As customary and tribal mediators, social agents take into consideration patriarchal interests and give them priority at the expense of women who almost always end up being killed.

The following recommendations should be considered to combat “honor killing” of women under the cover of “honor”:

First: “Honor killing” must be considered a crime and perpetrators must be considered criminals bearing legal responsibility for their crimes. Realizing this conceptual change requires time, persistence and action. However, as a starter at least three primary initiatives are to be taken:

* It is essential to pressure for legislations that protect women against violence in general and killing in particular. There is an urgent need to issue penal codes that would judge “honor killing” a crime of murder. There are no religious or other restrictions that would prevent such legislation. If the perpetrators would receive the sentence they deserve for committing a criminal act, women's killing would stop to be an easy matter.

* Changing the concept requires a change in the terminology of the discourse dealing with women's social status and their legal, civil and human rights; the term, “the crimes of women's killing,” should for instance replace terms in common use now like “honor crimes” and “honor killings.”

* To realize a change in the mentality and attitudes of the community (including the official authorities, families, tribal and clan structures, male and female youth and others) vis-a-vis the issue of women's killing requires advocacy, lobbying and awareness-raising campaigns. Of relevance within this context is the need for all concerned non-governmental and governmental parties to coordinate and collaborate to ensure they use the same terminology; to ensure reaching out to broader sectors of the community is equally important. The awareness-raising campaign should not be focused only on women and

girls but should attempt to communicate with and engage men and boys as well.

Second: Killing of women under the claim of “honor” should be approached as a public concern and not considered a “private” matter, left to the discretion of the family or the male members thereof. In the case of women's killing, even if it is claimed by perpetrators to be an “honor killing,” the executive branch of the judicial system should deem it imperative to activate and enforce all the legal and judicial procedures throughout the various stages of the criminal investigation, prosecution and the judiciary process, and to ensure these procedures are properly and adequately applied.

Third: To avoid registering women's killing in official records as a female death of “fate” or without a clearly documented reason, the Palestinian Ministry of Health should be demanded to seriously supervise the death registration process, and to issue clear and strict instructions, to health professionals and the families as well, that no death would be registered without a clear statement of its cause.

Finally, lobbying, advocacy and public awareness-raising activities should be supported with adequate relevant data and documentation of the crimes of women's killing. In this respect, it is imperative to produce a guide for proper documentation and data collection. The guide should include a clear systematic method of what information is needed to be collected and how it should be documented. Moreover, the guide should address the needs of all parties concerned, particularly the police, health services, and women's and human rights organizations.