

**MAPPING AND ANALYZING THE LANDSCAPE
OF
FEMICIDE IN PALESTINIAN SOCIETY**

Report Submitted to UNIFEM

Prepared By

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Ph. D.

Project and Research Director

Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling

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Table of Contents

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Primary Objectives of the Project	1
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	2
Methodology Used	6
Target Population	7
Research Techniques Used	7
Documentation Collected	9
Procedure	11
Data Analysis	12
Organization of Report	12
SECTION ONE: DESCRIPTIVE DATA	14
Demographic Characteristics of Clinical Cases	14
Referral Agency/Party and Nature of Problems Encountered	16
Distribution of Cases According to Femicide Level	17
Clients' Quest for Help	18
Scope and Nature of Threats	18
Perception and Definition of Problems Posed	19
Identified Sources and Resources in Support of the Client	20
Obstacles Encountered During Intervention Phase	21
Type of Intervention Used	21
Non-Conventional Strategies Employed	22

SECTION TWO: PROFILES OF CASES	24
Profile of Femicide Cases	24
Profile of Cases Seeking Police Help	32
Perceived Femicide Threat Profile	34
Blaming Self Profile	35
General Profile	35
SECTION THREE: CLINICAL ANALYSIS OF CASES	37
Introduction	37
Major Obstacles and Issues Confronting Helpers	39
Concluding Remarks	54
SECTION FOUR: DEALING WITH FEMICIDE THROUGH THE TRIBAL SYSTEM	55
Rationale for Including Tribal System	55
Selected Sample	55
Data Collection	56
Findings	57
Sources of Tribal Law	57
Prevalence of Utilizing the Tribal System	57
Tribal Principles Governing Femicide	58
Prevalence of Phenomenon	62
Reasons Given for Femicide	62
Instruments Used to Commit Femicide	64
Perceived Methods of Preventing Femicide	64
SECTION FIVE: ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM ATTORNEY	

GENERAL'S OFFICE	66
SECTION SIX: ANALYSIS OF COURT RECORDS	71
Historical Legal Background	71
Sources of Data analyzed	72
Findings and Analysis	73
Discriminatory Nature of Penal Code	75
Discriminatory Practices of Prosecutors and District Attorney	76
Discriminatory Practices of Presiding Judges	78
External Social-Political Pressure on Judicial System	82
SECTION SEVEN: ANALYSIS OF POLICE RECORDS AND INTERVIEWS	84
Conflicting and Contradictory Points of Departure/Frames of Reference	85
A Critical Perspective of How Femicide is Dealt With	87
Difficulties Facing Police Personnel	89
Credibility of Information Provided to Police	91
All in the name of Sutra and Dabdabeh	93
Hardships Resulting from Confusion of Role	94
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY	104
APPENDECES	110

INTRODUCTION

The murder of individuals, in general, generates social reactions that are characterized by anger and outrage. Femicide (murder of women), however, has rarely been the subject of feminist and non-feminist analysts. This study is the first of its nature in the Arab World to study such atrocities. Its significance lies in the hope that the obtained results will contribute to various efforts that aim to assist in saving the lives of women and girls. Researchers, activists, and clinicians who have dealt with such situations faced difficulties in delineating the depth, scope, complexity, and nature of femicide. Furthermore, we do not possess an adequate understanding or “guidelines” on how to help victims in distress. We do not know with any assurance how to proceed in cases where the life of a female is threatened. The results of this project, we believe, have shed new light on this uncharted path. Furthermore, this project could serve as a foundation for developing a data base encompassing the nature, scope, and social reaction to such crimes on the one hand. It also encompasses cases of females who are either threatened with death, or who are actually killed. Finally, this project has generated academic and theoretical benefits to researchers and academics who pursue this line of investigation.

Primary Objectives of the Project

The primary objective of this project was to examine the landscape of femicide in Palestine, taking into consideration the factors and variables that lead to femicide from an action-oriented research perspective. Hence, it also directed its energy towards providing support at two levels: (a) supporting victims of femicide in the hope of averting their victimization, and (b) assisting service providers and policy makers in addressing and dealing with the issue. Breaking the historical social silence on the issue of femicide was one of the project’s main objectives. It is hoped that this step will bring about societal recognition of the pain of women and generate improved social responsibility and accountability to preclude the occurrence of such crimes. It is also hoped that the outcomes of this project will lead to the recognition that femicide is an urgent and alarming social problem. Placing femicide on the agenda of policy makers could advance feminist and human right thought regarding the issue, increase its general understanding; and, most importantly, mobilize forces to generate resistance to it.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Although the historical origin of femicide is as ancient as patriarchy itself, it has been ignored or sensationalized according to male standards of the victim’s age, class, or circumstances. Social reaction to femicide has been characterized by temporary horror or general apathy that are laced with stereotypical beliefs and victim blaming. We define femicide in this project as the extreme limit of the anti-female terror spectrum. It includes a wide variety of verbal, non-verbal, physical, social, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect (e.g., rape, torture, sexual slavery, incest, and child sexual abuse). These abuses are considered femicide when they cause the

victim to live under continuous terror of being threatened with death – from a living to an actual death.

The emergence of actions to combat femicide in the Arab World (including Palestine) has been very slow. Political, economic, legal, cultural, and religious factors not only have affected the prevalence of femicide, but also strengthened it. Moreover, social reaction to female victimization has been characterized by “inaction-tolerance;” and, at times, by total muteness (Ahmad, 1992; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999a, b; Al-Sadawi, 1983). Although general knowledge regarding the occurrence of such crimes exists, little evidence is available regarding its nature, characteristics, and prevalence.

Generally speaking, murder has routinely received a great deal of attention, although a paucity of detailed data exists at the individual level to allow a thorough examination of murder events. One aspect of murder, or the threat of murder, which has not been adequately explored quantitatively or qualitatively is femicide (Wilson, 1992; Polk, 1991). It has been found in homicide studies that not only structural and cultural factors explain homicide rates, but also sex and gender related factors (Gartner, 1990). The prevalence of homicide amongst women has been found to be greater than its counterpart amongst men (Riedel & Zahn, 1985; Stout, 1991; Radford, 1993). Hence, researchers have felt a growing need to re-examine cases of intimate violence that lead to homicide, especially in light of their epidemic and escalating increase (Radford & Russel, 1992; Zimring, 1983).

Radford and Russel (1992), in a recent book, discussed the crime of femicide within different countries (India, U.S. and U.K.) and concluded that it is a cross-cultural problem having its own unique history. The Center for Women Policy Studies (1991) expressed the opinion that femicide meets the requirements of widely acceptable definitions of hate crimes because it is based on gender, and the intimidation and terrorization of women by men.

Females have been found to be victims of homicide merely because they are females. A study conducted in the Island of Montreal at two different time periods (1954-1962; 1985-1989) showed that women were the main victims of such crimes, and the offenses usually occurred within the residence that the victim shared with her perpetrator (Boisvert, 1994). Stout (1993) found that demographic and situational factors also affect the killing of females by male relatives. Moreover, gender and possessiveness of males towards their female partners emerged as major features of male violence in situations of sexual intimacy (Polk & Ranson, 1991). More ominous, however, is the legal discriminatory practices exercised in cases of femicide.

For example, the Brazilian constitution guarantees the equality of women before the law. Brazilian courts, however, have exonerated men who kill their allegedly adulterous wives in order to protect their (men) “honor” (Human Rights Watch, 1995). Courts continued to exonerate men who murdered their wives or lovers on the basis of “defending their honor” (against alleged infidelity by the women) despite a ruling by the highest court of appeal in 1991 to negate the legitimacy of the honor defense. Similarly, Pakistani men who killed their allegedly adulterous wives invoked successfully what is termed as the “grave and sudden provocation” defenses to mitigate their sentences (Watch, 1995). Even in the U.S the

“heat of passion” defense has operated to reduce the punishment of men who murder their wives if they had witnessed her adulterous behavior (Coker, 1992).

The subject of femicide also has received little attention from researchers and writers in the Arab World. An article by Haeri (cited in Afkhami, 1995) shows, however, that women have been killed, threatened to be killed, and sentenced to life imprisonment for the crime of being raped. Female virginity has been shown by Mernissi (1982), on the other hand, as one of the main factors affecting further victimization of females. Doubts regarding the virginity of a bride could lead to her death as the result of the dramas and scandals generated by the families of the matrimonial couple. She stated that societies in which inequality exists between the sexes, polygamy is practiced, the virginity of brides is insisted upon, and sexual issues such as artificial virginity and orgasms are dealt with in a dishonest manner. Furthermore, the abuse of power and its ensuing femicide correlate are seen as “normal” behaviors and outcomes.

An examination of a number of legislative measures pertaining to femicide, or what is termed as “crimes of honor” in the Arab World, reveal that full or partial extenuation (*al-uthr al- muhill, al uthr al- mukhafif*) may be granted to perpetrators of intentional homicide to reduce their sentences (Moghaizel, 1986). Moghaizel revealed that penal codes call for punishments as serious as the death penalty for those who are found guilty of intentional homicide. The penal code, however, contains provisions that could benefit perpetrators of femicide who justify their act on the basis of defending “family honor”. The sentences of femicide offenders have been reduced considerably or waived entirely after invoking these provisions. The victims of such crimes, however, have always been female relatives (See Schuller, 1986).

Women have been killed in Palestine on the basis of what is termed as “family honor” (Warnock, 1990). Data gathered from the Aman hot-line during a six-month period showed that 20 out of 187 clients who called the hot-line were under threat of being killed. Local newspapers showed that seven cases of femicide took place within a three-month period in the Gaza Strip alone. A pilot study conducted by the Center showed that victims of crimes of honor were all females (ages seven months and older) who were allegedly raped, sexually abused, unfaithful, disobedient, or illegitimately pregnant. The study also revealed the methods used to kill (or threaten to kill) the victims such as burning, stabbing, slaying, suffocating, electrocuting, beating, and forced suicide (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999a, b).

Based on our understanding of the theoretical limitations of femicide, we have proposed a new conceptualization and definition of femicide. Hence, femicide, in this project, was defined within the following four broad categories:

1. Level I. The victim (or her helper) perceives that she is under threat of being killed; i.e., the victim is a potential case of actual femicide.
2. Level II. Verbal and non-verbal threats and insinuations (e.g., yielding knife in a threatening fashion in front of victim) of femicide are directed at the victim.
3. Level III. Attempted threats (e.g., stabbing, strangulation) of actual femicide are carried out against the victim.

4. Level IV. Victim is murdered – actual femicide.

The above definition was borne out of our belief that femicide should be defined from a female rather than a male perspective. Hence, the proposition of such a definition expresses a clear political statement: society cannot continue to normalize such atrocities. It allows us to speak the unspeakable, to think the unthinkable, to question the unquestionable, and write the unwritable. Only by following this path are we able to rebel against the legacy of oppression, and express our refusal to accept such terrorizing crimes.

Methodology Used

Given the intricacy of the subject-matter under study and the unavailability of previous research methodology and data associated with it, a primarily qualitative rather than statistical research paradigm was adopted. This mode of methodology was preferred for the following reasons:

1. The delicacy of the subject-matter may inhibit or hinder some participants (victims) to respond to a statistical paradigm.
2. Trust and empathy must be established between participant and “researcher” if meaningful data are to be collected. Qualitative/clinical techniques are better suited for such investigation.
3. The uncharted waters of the topic under study dictate that “probing” tools and techniques be employed during the data gathering process to delineate the parameters of the research question under investigation. Statistical designs are not amenable to such techniques.
4. The proposed research is an action-oriented one. It is concerned more with exploring techniques and strategies that will contribute in the prevention of the continuous victimization of women. Hence, the techniques used must be flexible and open to modification.

Target Population

The population targeted for this project consisted of the following:

1. All the women and girls who came to the attention of the Aman hot-line, and who were killed by a male or female relative for allegedly engaging in “illicit” social relationships.
2. All the women and girls who came to the attention of the Aman hot-line services, and who were threatened to be killed but the threat was not carried out.
3. Police officers who deal with issues of femicide.
4. Tribal notables and village Mukhtars who dealt with cases of femicide.
5. Court judges who presided over cases in which actual femicide was committed.

6. Attorney General.

Research Techniques Used

The research project relied basically on the following techniques:

1. Questionnaires. A detailed and comprehensive questionnaire (interview guide) was constructed for the use of the helpers in the Center in order to standardize the data and information they collect on the femicide cases reaching their attention (See Appendix: A). The constructed questionnaire was scrutinized by the project staff and consultant to ascertain its face validity and amenability to computer programming and coding. The questionnaire was adopted for use only after it underwent this rigorous scrutiny and consequent modifications.

2. Guided Interviews. Extensive guided interviews were conducted with the following formal and informal officials and individuals who dealt with cases of femicide. Although the interviews were flexible in terms of organization, they followed pre-established guidelines and formulated questions (See Appendix: B) to serve their multifaceted purpose. In addition to gathering data and information, we wished to examine the values, principles, beliefs, and actions the interviewed individual held and took when they dealt with femicide cases. Furthermore, we used the encounter to establish further contact and assistance to these individuals and agencies should they face situations in which the life of a female is threatened. The dialogue and relationship established during these contacts, we believe, has helped to raise their awareness and sensitivity to this matter.

A. Interviews With Police Officials. Individual interviews were held with 30 police officials in Ramallah, Qalqiliah, Nablus, Salfit, Hebron, Jericho, Jenin, and Bethlehem. During these interviews the police officials were introduced to the research project and asked how they deal with problems involving femicide, the threat of femicide, or committing actual femicide. Specifically, we wished to determine how the police treated such cases, and the measures they took (if any) to safeguard the female's safety and life. Furthermore, the interview was used to establish cooperation between the Center and the police to compliment each other's role for the benefit of females threatened of being killed.

B. Interviews With Tribal Notables and Village Mukhtars. Interviews were conducted with 20 tribal notables and village Mukhtars known to have dealt with cases of femicide. The basic aim of the interview was to map the perceptions, values, and principles guiding these individuals when they deal with these cases, and to collect information on the occurrence of such crimes. We attempted to ascertain from these interviews if such crimes take place but do not get reported or documented in the official records of the legal justice system, notably the police.

C. Interviews With Judges. Interviews were conducted with three judges who dealt and presided over cases of femicide to determine the perceptions (mentality), values, and principles that guided the judges during the femicide trials. The interview helped in one case to establish cooperation amongst the Center, judge, and police, that was successful in averting the death of a female who was threatened with femicide.

D. Interviews With Attorney General. Two meetings were held between the Attorney General and project director to introduce the project and establish cooperation between his office and the Center. Additional interviews were conducted with the Attorney General by the research assistant. The aim of the interviews was to determine how cases of femicide are prepared prior to the trial, and to gather available data (death of females due to suspicious causes) documented in the Attorney General's records.

E. Interviews With Chief Forensic Officer. Two interviews were held with the chief forensic officer and his assistant to determine the procedures taken when a suspected case of femicide occurs.

Documentation Collected.

We have been successful in collecting the following documentation:

A. Attorney General's Office. We were able to review the records available in the Attorney General's office. The records were examined for information pertaining to the cause of death, age of the victim, and decision of the Attorney General to prosecute the case or close it for lack of proper evidence.

B. Ministry of Health Statistics. The Ministry of Health was able to provide us with statistics on the cause, age, category, gender, and domicile of individuals who died in 1997 and 1998. The provided statistics, however, did not yield the information needed. For example, we wished to determine if the numerous cases of suspicious deaths amongst women documented in the Attorney General's office could be explained by the statistics provided by the Ministry of Health. Specifically, we wished to cross check each death in terms of its cause according to the death certificate (Ministry of Health) and the documentation in the Attorney General's office. Unfortunately, we did not succeed in our effort.

C. Police Statistics. We were able to obtain statistics from police departments regarding the number of level four femicide cases they dealt with.

D. Court Records. The Center was able to obtain eight records involving cases of femicide. The records were scrutinized for information regarding the evidence presented in court, the sentence levied at the offender, and details of the crime committed.

E. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. The bureau provided us with statistics regarding the number of crimes committed distributed according to type and region. Examination of the provided data revealed, however, that it cannot be utilized due to inadequacies of classification and breakdown able to serve the objectives of the research.

Procedure

Four research assistants were trained to carry out the following tasks:

1. Examine the files and records of the Center to scrutinize all the cases that came to its attention, and in which the client (victim) was threatened with death or killed by a male or female relative. Special attention was given to information documented on the action taken by the Center to aid the victim. Furthermore, the research assistants were instructed on how to gather demographic, personal, and clinical data on the victim.

2. Conduct clinical interviews with the victim and her relatives. Special focus was placed on how the victim perceived the situation, what steps she took to protect herself, and how she coped or was unable to cope with the social and psychological stressors she faced.

3. Conduct clinical interviews with family relatives who posed a threat to the victim. Focus of the interviews was on the social and cultural factors that prompted the “offender” to threaten or kill his/her female relative.

4. Conduct interviews with family members, formal social control agents (e.g., social services, police, judges, lawyers), and social notables. In each case, emphasis was placed on the social reaction of the member to the incident, what steps (s)he took to “contain” the situation, and his/her opinion regarding the threat or actual death of the victim.

5. Given that this research project was action oriented, the workers in the Center provided guidance and professional support to the victims being examined.

6. Given the delicacy and intricacy of the research, weekly meetings along with personal supervision were held between the project director and staff. The purpose of these meetings was to ensure that the intervention and support being provided will lead not only to help the victim cope with the situation, but also, to pave new ground to prevent the occurrence of new cases. Finally, a critique of the weekly meetings and in-depth case analyses provided the Center’s staff with the opportunity to formulate new strategies to help victims.

Data Analysis

The gathered data from the clinical cases and interviews were analyzed contextually to determine if certain differential themes and patterns emerged from victims and other interviewed (e.g., police, social notables, etc.) individuals. Focus was placed on the factors (age, education, place of domicile, profession, etc.) and variables (psychological, social, cultural, economic) which either seemed to mitigate or facilitate the femicide threat.

The data also were analyzed statistically. The questionnaire designed for the clinical cases was coded, and the information within it transcribed into nominal measures. A computer program was designed to assimilate and treat the coded data using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)** program. The data were analyzed in terms of descriptive (means, standard, deviations, and percentages) as well as non-parametric (e.g., Chi Square analysis) statistics.

Organization of the Report

This report has been organized into seven major sections dealing with various, although related and inter-dependent, aspects of the nature, scope, and social-cultural-political correlates of femicide in Palestine (West Bank). The first three sections are based on data collected on the clients who sought the assistance of the Center. Section one provides statistical descriptive data (e.g., demographics, prevalence, geographic distributions, etc.) on the cases dealt with, while the second section constructs profiles of the cases based on advanced statistical analyses. Section three is devoted to an in-depth qualitative analysis of the clinical data gathered on the cases reaching the Center. It shows the major themes and patterns that emerged from the critical analysis of the cases.

Sections four to seven are based on interviews and data gathered from sources within the community that have dealt with females threatened with femicide. While section four treats how tribal notables perceive and deal with cases of femicide, sections five, six, and seven are based on data and interviews conducted with officials within the criminal justice system. For example, section five analyzes the data gathered from the Attorney General's office, while section six provides a critical analysis of a sample of level four femicide cases reaching the courts. An analysis of the interviews conducted with police officers is presented in section seven. The report terminates with a conclusion and recommendation section.

Section One: Descriptive Data

This analysis is based on the 69 cases that have been served by Social Unit of the Center between June 1, 1997 and November 1, 1999, and on which the statistical and clinical analyses will be based. The analysis will be organized according to the variables identified in the femicide instrument (See Appendix: A) developed specifically for this project, initially in terms of descriptive statistics, and finally in terms of clinical interpretation of the cases treated.

Demographic Characteristics of Clinical Cases

Table 1 depicts the distribution of the clinical cases according to district:

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Clients

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
District		
North	22	31.9
Central	24	34.8
Hebron	18	26.1
Gaza	5	7.1
Domicile		
Camp	7	10.4
Village	38	56.7
City	21	31.4
Badia (Bedouin)	1	1.5
Age		
≤ 3	2	1.6
14 - 20	25	37.9

21 – 30	28	42.3
32 – 49	12	18.2
Socio-Economic Status		
Very Poor	12	17.6
Poor	25	36.8
Middle	27	39.7
High	4	5.9

North (N = 22), Central (N = 24), and Hebron (N = 18) and the Gaza Strip (N = 5). This distribution is not surprising given the restrictions placed by the Israeli authorities on travel between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The five cases referred from the Gaza Strip were of such a severe nature that it took the concerted effort, cooperation, and coordination of the Palestinian Police to facilitate their travel to the West Bank. The Table also reveals that more than one-half (56.7%) of the clients lived in villages compared with less than one-third (31.4%) who lived in cities, and approximately one-tenth who came from refugee camps. Only one case came from the Badia (Nomadic Bedouin). It is worthy to mention here that this distribution does not deviate significantly from the actual demographic distribution of Palestinians in the West Bank.

The age distribution of the clients shown in Table 1 shows that more than three-fourths of them were between the ages of 14-20 (37.9%) and 21-30 (42.3%). In other words, approximately 80% of the clients were teenage girls or young women. In comparison, middle aged women (32-49) accounted for less than one-fifth of the total number of clients, while only two cases were toddlers (less than three).

An examination of the socioeconomic status (S.E.S.) of the clients, as depicted in Table 1, shows that more than one-half were either very poor (17.6%) or poor (36.8%) compared with slightly less than 40% who came from families judged to be of middle income and social status. A minute (5.9%) percentage of the clients was classified as high income and social status. In other words, the clientele of the Center are basically of limited or average income and social status. Our clinical experience leads us to believe that alternatives available to individuals from the higher socioeconomic strata are not available to the poor. Hence, the service provided by the Center appears to be the sole address for low-middle income females who are in distress.

The marital status of the clients shows that slightly more than one-half (N = 37, 53.6%) are unmarried compared with only 14.5% (N = 10) who were either married, divorced (N = 9, 13.1%), abandoned (N = 8, 11.6%), or betrothed (N = 5, 7.2%). In other words, the overwhelming majority (85.5%) were not living with a male partner when they came to the attention of the Center.

Referral Agency/Party and Nature of Problems Encountered

The clients were not referred to the Center by one single or major party, agency, or source. Referrals from mental health, helping, and women organizations and centers accounted for the largest (39.7%) block of referrals, followed by referrals from individuals (19.1%), the prison system (16.2%), and the Center's Hot-Line (7.4%). Nearly one-fifth (17.6%) of the referrals were attributed to other sources.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Abuses Encountered*

<u>Type of Abuse</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Sexual Abuses	46	44.7
Rape	6	5.8
Abortion	7	6.8
Incest	17	16.5
Illegitimate Pregnancy/Delivery	11	10.7
Loss of Virginity	5	4.8
Physical and Social-Cultural Abuses	35	34.0
Assumptions of Romantic Affairs	6	5.8
Romantic Affairs	13	12.8
Running Away From Home	16	15.7
Multiple Abuses	22	21.3
Total	103	100.0

* Some cases involved more than one type of abuse

The type of abuses encountered was categorized into three major and nine different sub-categories as shown in Table 2. Sexual abuses accounted for nearly half

(44.7%) of the total number of abuses, followed by slightly more than one-third (34.0%) for physical and social-cultural abuses. Multiple (sexual/physical/social-cultural) abuses, on the other hand, accounted for more than one-fifth (21.3%) of the total. An examination of Table 2 reveals that incest (16.5%) and running away from home (15.7%) were the two most prevalent abuses encountered after the multiple abuses. It should be stressed here that running away from the home was never encountered solely; it always resulted from its association with other types (e.g., physical) of abuses.

Although loss of virginity (4.8%), rape (5.8%), and abortion (6.8%) appear to be the least encountered abuses, the percentages provided are to some extent misleading. For example, some of the abortion cases also involved incest, loss of virginity, illegitimate pregnancy, and led the client to abort her fetus. Hence, it is not surprising to see that many of the clients served by the Center were subjected to multiple abuses. The data in Table 2 also show that nearly one-fifth (18.4%) of the abuses encountered were the result of actual (12.6%) or social assumption (5.8%) that the female had a romantic relationship with a male.

Distribution of Cases According to Femicide Level

More than one-half (52.9%) of the cases treated in the Center fell within level-one femicide; i.e., the client perceived that she is under the threat of being killed. This category also included the helper's perception that the client's life is being threatened. Nearly one-third (30.9%) of the cases treated involved explicit or implicit verbal or non-verbal threats and insinuations directed at the client (Level-Two), whereas eight clients (11.8%) were subjected to attempts (e.g., stabbing) on their lives (Level-Three). Tragically, three of the clients lost their lives during this period. As can be seen clearly from these data, perceived or actual threats of femicide (Levels One and Two) represent the overwhelming majority (83.8%) of cases.

Clients' Quest for Help

The gathered data, as shown in Table 3, reveal that the clients sought the help of a variety of sources and with varying frequencies. It is not surprising, however, to

Table 3

Seeking Help From Others According to Frequency and Party

Source		Frequency										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	≥10
Nuclear Family	(27)	41	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	19
Extended Family	(20)	48	4	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	12
Mukhtars	(8)	60	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Social Services	(19)	49	4	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	11
Police	(30)	38	3	1	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	19
Hot-Line	(46)	46	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	39
Hospitals	(19)	49	4	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	10
Physicians	(24)	44	7	2	3	1	0	1	0	1	0	9
Center	(3)	65	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Friends	(7)	61	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Governor/PNA	(4)	64	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate total times client sought help

note that the hot-line was the most (46) sought source of help by the clients followed by the police (30), nuclear family (27), physician (24), extended family (20), hospital (19), and social services (19). The data also reveal an interesting trend: Clients tend to seek help either once or repeatedly (ten or more times) from a given source. This behavior could be explained by the history of the clients. The data revealed that nearly 60% of the clients were subjected to threats prior to their coming to the attention of the Center.

Scope and Nature of Threats

Nearly one half (48.5%) of the clients expressed that they will be killed if their parents discovered the “problem”, while more than one-third (35.3%) felt that to be killed is their ultimate destiny. The data also showed clearly that members of the nuclear family constituted the largest (Parents = 61.8%; Brothers and Sisters = 58.2%) source of threat to the client followed by members of the extended family (Uncles = 25.0%; Other Members = 17.6%), grandfathers (1.5%) being the least source of threat. The data reveal a clear paradox: The group that is the source of the most threat

to the victim also serves as her primary address as shown by Table 3. It is also interesting to note that a sizable (29.4%) percentage of the threats came from non-relatives. Furthermore, the threats emanated from reasons associated with family honor and fear of scandal. For, example, fear of violating family honor (36.4%) and scandal (39.4%) were the two most mentioned reasons, followed by accusations that the client has committed an “honor” violation (19.7%) or did not defend herself during the abuse (4.5%). As can be clearly seen from the data, threats of femicide are based primarily on socially constructed fears.

Perception and Definition of Problems Posed

Three sources (client, accompanying person, and help provider) were examined regarding the definition of the problem posed. Nearly two thirds (64.7%) of the clients defined their problem as being threatened with death either as a result of being accused of “sexual misconduct” (30.9%) or for being sexually abused (33.8%), while slightly more than one-third (35.3%) defined their problem within the realm of marriage (20.6%) or family (14.7%). The helpers at the Center, however, gave finer definitions of the problems being posed. One-third of the problems were defined by the helpers as direct threats on the lives of the clients due to disclosure of the abuse, and approximately one-fourth (25.7%) of the problems were defined as direct threats of femicide due to actual (13.6%) or suspected (12.1%) romantic affairs and “sexual misconduct” or abuse. Furthermore, nearly one-fifth (19.7%) of the problems were defined as femicide threats due to illegitimate pregnancies and deliveries, and 13.6% due to rape and incest. The remaining 7.7% of the problems fell within the rubric of “Other Problems” such as psychological disturbances.

The client was accompanied to the Center by another individual (e.g., parents) in 60% of the cases. Illegitimate pregnancies of unmarried (27.5%), divorced (12.5%), and woman who leave their homes (7.5%) were the most prevalently (47.5%) defined problems by the accompanying individuals, followed by sexual abuse (35.0%) and loss of virginity (17.5%). In other words, the accompanying individuals generally defined the problem within two broad and nearly equal categories: sexual abuse and illegitimate pregnancies.

Identified Sources and Resources in Support of the Clients

The helpers at the Center worked diligently to identify and activate/recruit as many sources and resources possible (e.g., family, informal social agents, and service providers) in order to support the client. The data shows clearly that the helpers were successful in activating/recruiting these sources in approximately three-fourths of the cases. For example, the family was activated to provide moral and financial support in 70.2% of the cases. Furthermore, informal community agents such as tribal notables, the clergy, and political leaders were activated/recruited in 76.8% of the cases. In some cases, the helpers were faced with financial/economic challenges (e.g., resources to perform an abortion) to provide assistance to their clients. These challenges were met successfully in three-fourths of the cases by tapping the resources of women centers and organizations, the family, and other sources within the community (e.g., social, religious, and charitable organizations). It should be noted here that the Center provided the largest (32.7%) single source of economic support to the clients. Although other sources (e.g., family, other individuals) of economic support were activated, they generally provided support in conjunction with

other sources. A similar picture evolves when one examines the data on the role various service agencies played in supporting the clients. Once again, women centers were the sole sources that provided their services unilaterally. Other sources (e.g., social services, health system), however, provided their services in conjunction with other service providers.

Obstacles Encountered During Intervention Phase

The results yielded by the research attest to the difficulty in attempting to provide aid to females in distress as shown in Table 4. An examination of the data

Table 4

Obstacles Encountered During Intervention

<u>Type of Obstacle</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Non-Respect of Confidentiality by Others	1.5
Desire of Others to Close Case Prematurely (Tabtabeh)	12.3
Encountering Unexpected Events	7.7
Client is Labeled Negatively	21.5
Absence of Legislation Designed to Protect Victim	6.2
Multiple Obstacles	50.7

will show that the helpers encountered multiple obstacles in half (50.7%) of the cases. The desire of other cooperating parties to close the case prematurely (tabtabeh), and the negative labeling of the client resulting from the disclosure of her abuse constituted the two most prevalent single obstacles (12.3% and 21.5% respectively).

Type of Intervention Used

Three (legal, therapeutic, medical) major interventions were utilized by the helpers. Given that the nature of work provided by the Social Services Unit of the Center is primarily therapeutic, it is not surprising to find that therapeutic interventions were employed in 92.5% of the cases. By the same token, many of the cases treated at the Center have medical and legal implications. Hence, the data reflect this fact when they reveal that medical and legal interventions were used in 44.8% and 26.9% of the cases respectively. In essence, one would expect that approximately one-half and one-fourth of the cases coming to the attention of the

Center would necessitate the additional intervention of the medical and legal units. The data affirm the premise that helping females in distress is a multidisciplinary and multifaceted in nature and practice.

Non-Conventional Strategies Employed

The obstacles identified in the previous section imposed on the helpers the necessity of being creative and non-conventional in their approach. Hence, a host of creative, and, at times spontaneous, strategies were developed as shown in Table 5.

The data shown in Table 5 points to the helpers' commitment to the clients they served. For example, they did not hesitate (one-fourth of the cases) to use unconventional methods to respond to emergency situations, and provided uninterrupted support to the client and her family when the situation dictated that. For example, the staff did not hesitate to call the District Governor late at night when they learned that

Table 5
Non-Conventional Strategies Utilized

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Drawing Private/Legal Contracts	14	17.1
Activation and Recruitment of Relatives	5	6.1
Providing Uninterrupted Support to Victim and Family	18	22.0
Spontaneous-Unconventional Emergency Response	22	26.8
Use of Mobile Phone	2	2.4
Use of Indirect-Unobtrusive Techniques	21	25.6
Total	82	100.0

a client was in serious danger. They, along with the Governor's security personnel, were able to enter the client's home and avert a tragedy. The data also demonstrates

the introduction and use of new and innovative strategies such the private-legal contract (17.1%), and even the mobile phone. Finally, the case workers focused on the activation and recruitment of the client's family and relatives to transform them from agents hostile to the client to sources supporting her.

Section Two: Profiles of Cases

This section encompasses profiles developed from statistical analyses based on cross-tabulations of the various variables, and corresponding Chi Square values to determine if the distribution of the profile deviates significantly from chance level.

Profile of Femicide Cases

1. Demographic Profile. Table 6 depicts the profile of femicide cases according to district, residence, marital status, and socioeconomic status.

Table 6

Distribution of Femicide Cases According to Level X District,
Residence, Marital Status, and Socio-Economic Status

District	Femicide Level				<u>Total</u>
	1	2	3	4	
North	7	10	2	2	21
Central	16	7	0	1	24
Hebron	11	3	4	0	18
Gaza	2	1	2	0	5

Residence					
Camp	1	2	4	0	7
Village	21	9	4	3	37
City	13	8	0	0	21
Badia	0	1	0	0	1

Marital Status

Unmarried	21	11	3	2	37
Married	6	3	0	0	9
Divorced	2	3	3	1	9
Abandoned	2	4	2	0	8
Betrothed	5	0	0	0	5

Socio-Economic Status

Very Poor	3	6	1	1	11
Poor	12	8	5	0	25
Middle	17	6	6	6	27
High	3	1	0	0	4

The data in Table 6 indicates that the perception of going to be killed is highest in the Central (66.7%) and Hebron (61.1%) districts, while verbal and non-verbal threats were highest in the Northern (49.7%) and Central (29.2%) districts. Level three femicide (attempts that lead to injury) were most prevalent in the Hebron (22.2%) and Gaza (20.0%) districts. As can be seen from the Table, the Central district is characterized mostly by perceived and verbal and non-verbal threats of femicide. The Northern district by comparison, is characterized by verbal and non-verbal threats, followed by perceived and actual threats. It is worthy to note here that the three cases of actual femicide came from the Northern and Central districts, although the interviews conducted by tribal notables suggest that it is much higher in the Hebron district. They claimed that level four femicide is either embedded in non-criminal cases of death, or is completely hidden. The distribution of femicide cases according to district is significant at the .06 level.

The distribution of cases according to place of residence shows that villagers tend to express verbal and non-verbal (24.3%) and actual (10.8%) threats in addition to threats perceived by either the client or helper (56.8%). All three cases of actual femicide came from villages. By contrast, the largest percent of clients who perceived themselves as being threatened with femicide came from the cities. Furthermore, city dwellers tended to verbalize threats of femicide more than any group if we exclude the two cases from the Badia. This profile also appears to carry statistical significance

(p, = .08).

Marital status appears to be associated primarily with levels one (56.8%, 66.7%) and two (29.7%, 33.3%) amongst married and unmarried females respectively. None of the married clients was subjected to femicide levels three or four. Divorced women, on the other hand, were subjected to all four levels of femicide, perceived threats being the least. A similar pattern was observed for women who were abandoned by their husbands. The threat of femicide was limited to level one amongst betrothed females. This distribution is of limited statistical significance ($p = .16$).

Given that the number of cases coming from the high S.E.S. is low ($N = 5$), the profile of level of femicide according to S.E.S. will be limited to the three other groups. The cross-tabulation Table shows that women from the middle class stratum tend to perceive threats of femicide (level one) more (63%) than their counterparts from the poor (48.0%) and very poor (27.3%) strata. While the very poor tend to be subjected more than any other group to level two femicide (54.5%), it appears that the data reflect a better picture when the categories of very poor and poor (economically disadvantaged) and middle and high (economically advantaged) are collapsed. While both groups appear to be similar in terms of being subjected to level one femicide (75.3% for economically disadvantaged; 69.5% for economically advantaged), the economically disadvantaged group is subjected to level two femicide twice (86.5%) as much as the economically advantaged (47.5%) group. Level three femicide (actual attempts) appears to be limited to the economically disadvantaged (29.1%) rather than economically advantaged (7.4%) group. The two groups are similar in terms of level four femicide (9.1% for disadvantaged group. 7.4% for advantaged group). This distribution obtained the least statistical significance ($p = .551$). In other words, the subjection of a Palestinian female to threats of femicide is not bound by socio-economic status.

2. Events Leading to Threats Profile. Four categories of events have been identified to be associated with evoking threats of femicide amongst the clients. Table 7a shows the relationship between these events and the level of femicide. The

Table 7a
Distribution of Events Leading to Threat of Femicide
According to Femicide Level

<u>Type of Threat</u>	<u>Femicide Level</u>				<u>Total</u>
	1	2	3	4	
Accusation of Dishonoring Family	9	3	1	0	13

Accusation of not Defending Self	1	1	1	0	3
Fear of Dishonoring Family	11	9	3	1	24
Fear of Social Scandal	14	8	3	1	26
Total	35	21	8	2	66

Note: Three cases are missing from the analysis

data clearly show that fear of social scandal and dishonoring the family represent approximately three-fourths (75.8%) of the events leading to the threat of femicide. Furthermore, a close analysis of the Table reveals that these fears are warranted given that over one-third (37.9%) of the clients who fell within the fear categories were subjected to femicide levels two, three, and four. More precisely, a female who expresses fears of femicide has a good probability of being subjected either to verbal/nonverbal threats, or actual attempts of femicide. It should be noted here that the two actual cases of femicide fell within these two fear categories.

Clients also verbalized the reasons that led to their feeling of being threatened as shown in Table 7b. Slightly more than one-half (51.5%) of the clients believed that

Table 7b
 Perceived Reasons of Being Threatened According
 To District, Domicile, Marital Status, and S.E.S.

	<u>Killing is Sole</u>	<u>Presence of Gossips</u>	<u>Social Non-Acceptance</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Cultural Alter.</u>	<u>And Rumors</u>	<u>if Abuse Disclosed</u>	
District				
North	12	7	3	22
Central	7	7	9	23
Hebron	12	2	4	18
Gaza	4	0	1	5
Total	35	16	17	68
Domicile				
Camp	6	1	0	7
Village	18	9	11	38
City	9	6	5	20
Badia	1	0	0	1
Marital Status				
Unmarried	17	8	12	37

Married	1	6	2	9
Divorced	8	0	1	9
Abandoned	6	1	1	8
Betrothed	3	1	1	5

S.E.S

Very Poor	9	2	1	12
Poor	10	6	9	25
Middle	12	7	7	26
High	3	1	0	4

Note: Two cases were missing from the Domicile data, one case from Marital Status data, and one case from S.E.S. data.

the reason for feeling threatened is due to the unavailability of cultural alternatives to being killed. The presence of rumors (23,5%), along with gossips and social non-acceptance (25.0%) of the abuse if disclosed, accounted for the other half of the reasons for feeling threatened. The demographic distribution shown in Table 7b also shows that females from the Central district felt that social non-acceptance of the abuse if disclosed to be the leading reason for being threatened, whereas the leading reason given by females from the North, Hebron, and Gaza was related to killing being the only culturally accepted alternative. This variance in response could well be attributed to the prevailing social beliefs within the various districts. It is generally believed that the Central districts of Palestine are less conservative than their counterparts in the North, Hebron, and Gaza.

The distribution of perceived reasons for being threatened according to place of domicile does not show significant deviance from the overall distribution, especially amongst clients living in villages and cities; i.e., the category of “being killed is the sole cultural alternative” accounted for approximately half of the reasons, whereas the remaining two other reasons were divided equally.

The data pertaining to marital status and perceived reasons for being threatened show a definite and clear pattern: Females who are not living with a male partner (unmarried, divorced, abandoned) attribute the reason for their feeling of being threatened to the notion that society does not offer culturally acceptable alternatives to taking the life of the female. This feeling is strongest (88.9%) amongst divorced and abandoned (75.0%) women, followed by betrothed (60.0%) females.

Reasons attributed to gossips and rumors were strongest amongst married women. The distribution of perceived reasons for being threatened according to socio-economic status did not yield any significant patterns.

3. Intervention Profile. The findings regarding the type of intervention provided to the femicide cases are consistent: All clients received therapeutic, legal, and medical interventions as shown in Table 8. An examination of Table 8 reveals that approximately 16% - 20% of the clients were provided with legal intervention, compared with 50% - 61% and 23% - 30% for therapeutic and medical interventions irrespective of the femicide level to which they were subjected.

Table 8
Femicide Cases Distributed According to Intervention Strategy

<u>Type of Intervention</u>	<u>Femicide Level</u>				<u>Total</u>
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	
Legal	9	5	3	4	18
Therapeutic	33	19	8	2	62
Medical	17	7	5	1	30
Total	59	31	16	4	110

Note: Many clients received more than one type of intervention.

4. Seeking Police Help Profile. The findings depicted in Table 9 show that over one-half (56.7%) of the clients did not seek the assistance of the police regarding the perceived, attempted, or actual femicide threats to which they were subjected.

Table 9
Distribution of Femicide Cases According to Degree
(Percentage) of Seeking Police Help

Degree of Seeking Police Help

<u>Level of Femicide</u>	None	(1-8 Times)	(≥10 Times)
Perceived Threats	77.8	5.6	16.7
Verbal/Non-Verbal Threats	33.3	28.6	38.1
Attempted Femicide	37.5	25.0	37.5
Actual Femicide	00.0	50.0	50.0

Note: Distribution is statistically significant at the .01 level.

Females subjected to level one femicide were the most (77.8%) reluctant to seek the help of the police, while nearly one-third of females subjected to levels two (33.7%) and three (37.5%) of femicide did not seek the help of the police. The help of the police was sought in all three cases involving actual femicide. The data also reveal an interesting finding: Females tend to either solicit the help of the police with low (1-3 times) or high (more than ten times) frequency irrespective of the femicide level to which they were subjected. The femicide distribution according to frequency of seeking police assistance is significant at the .01 level. It appears that the greater the threat, the more females are willing to seek the help of the police as shown in Table 9.

5. Type of Abuse Profile. The cases were organized under three major

Table 10

Frequency of Abuses Encountered According to Femicide Level

<u>Type of Case</u>	<u>Femicide Level</u>				<u>Total</u>
	1	2	3	4	
Sexual Abuses	29	12	3	2	46
Rape	3	2	1	0	6

Abortion	6	0	0	1	7
Incest	11	5	0	1	17
Illegitimate Pregnancies/Deliveries	4	5	2	0	11
Loss of Virginity	5	0	0	0	5
=====					
Social-Cultural Abuses	15	15	3	2	35
Assumptions of Romantic Affair	2	1	2	1	6
Romantic Affair	10	3	0	0	13
Running Away From Home	3	11	1	1	16
Multiple Abuses	10	8	3	1	22
Grand Total	54	35	9	5	103

Note: Some cases involved more than one type of abuse.

categories (Sexual Abuse, Physical/Social-Cultural Abuse, and Multiple Abuse) according to femicide level as shown in Table 10. Analysis of major categories

according to femicide level reveals that perceived threats (Level One) of femicide are highest (28.2%) amongst the group subjected to sexual abuses, followed by physical and social-cultural abuses (14.6%) and multiple abuses (9.7%). By comparison, verbal and non-verbal threats of femicide (Level Two) were provoked amongst clients who were subjected to physical and socio-cultural abuses more than those who were subjected to sexual (11.6%) or multiple (7.7%) abuses. The data do not indicate any major differences (percentages ranged between 0.9 and 2.9) between type of abuse and femicide levels three (attempted femicide) and four (actual femicide).

Profile of Cases Seeking Police Help

1. Demographic Profile. More than one-half (55.9%) of the cases treated did

not seek the help of the police as shown in Table 11, especially in the Hebron (72.2%)

Table 11
Distribution of Cases Seeking Police Help
According to District and Place of Residence

<u>District</u>	<u>Frequency of Seeking Police Help</u>				
	<u>None</u>	<u>1-8</u>	<u>≥10</u>	<u>Total</u>	
North		12	0	9	21
Central		11	8	5	24
Hebron		13	1	4	18
Gaza		2	2	1	5
Total		38	11	19	68
Place of Residence					
Camp		1	2	4	7
Village		24	4	9	37
City		12	4	5	21
Badia		0	0	1	1

Note: The total for the section on place of residence has two missing cases.

district. Clients coming from the Central district sought the help of the police more (45.9%) than any other group. The cases coming from the Central district also tended to address the police systematically more than the cases in the other districts. For example, one-third of the cases from the Central district addressed the police 1-8 times and slightly more than one-fifth (20.8%) addressed them ten or more times. By comparison, cases coming from the Hebron district were reluctant to address the police as mentioned previously. However, they seek the help of the police repeatedly (more than ten times) when they do so. This trend also was observed in the North where females tended either not to seek the police (57.1%) or address them repeatedly

(42.9%). To what extent this reluctance to address the police, especially in the Hebron district, is related to the position, role, and power of the tribal system is not known.

Table 11 also shows that villagers (64.9%) and city dwellers (57.1%) tend not to seek the help of the police when compared with camp (14.3%) dwellers. When females addressed the police, those living in the camps were more persistent in their behavior (57.1%) than their counterparts in the village (24.3%) or city (23.8%).

The tendency to seek the help of the police seems to be equally distributed in terms of marital status with the exception of women who were either abandoned or

Table 12
Distribution of Frequency of Addressing the Police
According to Marital Status and S.E.S.

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Frequency of Seeking Police Help</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>None</u>	<u>1-8</u>	<u>≥10</u>	
Unmarried	19	8	9	36
Married	6	1	3	10
Divorced	6	0	3	9
Abandoned	2	2	4	8
Betrothed	5	0	0	5
<u>Socio-Economic Status</u>				
Very Poor	5	2	4	11
Poor	16	3	6	25
Middle	15	5	7	27
High	2	1	1	4

betrothed (they were excluded from the analysis due to their small numbers). Table 12 generally shows that women are reluctant to seek the help of the police irrespective of whether they were unmarried (52.8%), married (60.0%), or divorced (66.7%). In other words, one-half to two-thirds of women are reluctant to address the police in times of distress irrespective of their marital status. Once women seek the help of the police, however, they tend to persistently address them (ten or more times) between one-fourth to one-third of the times depending on whether they were unmarried (25.0%), married (30.0%) or divorced (33.3%).

The data in Table 12 also shows that the reluctance of women to address the police is independent of their S.E.S. For example, more than one-half (58.3%) of economically deprived (very poor and poor) and 54.8% of economically advantaged (middle and high) women were reluctant to seek the help of the police. Women, however, showed the familiar consistent and persistent pattern of addressing the police when they chose such a strategy irrespective of S.E.S.

Perceived Femicide Threat Profile

Table 13 depicts the relationship between seeking the help of the police and

Table 13
Frequencies and (Percentages) of Seeking the Aid
of the Police According to Perceived Threat of Femicide

<u>Perceived Threat</u>	<u>Frequency of Addressing Police</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>None</u>	<u>1-8</u>	<u>≥10</u>	
Will Be Killed If Abuse Disclosed	14 (41.2)	9 (26.5)	11 (32.3)	34 (100)
Will Not Be Killed If Abuse Disclosed	24 (72.7)	2 (6.1)	7 (21.2)	33 (100)
Destiny Is To Be Killed	33 (76.7)	3 (7.0)	7 (16.3)	43 (100)

Destiny Is Not To Be Killed	5	8	11	24
	(20.8)	(33.3)	(45.9)	(100)

the feeling of being threatened. The Table reflects two basic relationships: (a) a tendency not to seek the assistance of the police when the abuse has not been disclosed, and (b) a paradoxical reluctance to address the police when the victim is resigned (hopeless) to the belief that her ultimate destiny is to be killed. For example, while 58.8% of the clients who felt that they will be killed if the abuse was disclosed sought the aid of the police, only 27.3% did so when they felt the abuse will not be disclosed. In essence, disclosure poses a stronger threat to the victim. Paradoxically, however, when the victim felt hopeless (i.e., strongly believed that she will ultimately be killed), the probability (20.8%) of her seeking the aid of the police is diminished considerably. Irrespective of the presence or absence of a threat, clients tended to persistently seek the help of the police once they opted for that strategy. It should be mentioned here that these results were highly significant ($p = 0.001$) statistically.

Blaming Self Profile

Nearly all (89.6%) clients expressed a degree of personal responsibility (self-blame) for the abuses inflicted upon them. Given the nature of how Palestinian society perceives abuses perpetrated against females, the obtained outcome is not surprising. Females are acculturated early in life to take responsibility for “protecting their honor”. Consequently, violations inflicted on that “honor” produce a host of questions and accusations directed at the female. The first question asked by family members and society is: “What has she done to evoke this abuse?”

General Profile

Prior to attempting to draw a general profile of the femicide cases treated at the Center, it should be stressed unequivocally that each case is unique, and no statistical analysis, simple or sophisticated, can describe the personal, cultural, and psychosocial cosmos of an abused female. The profile presented is not intended to replace the uniqueness and complexity of the cases encountered. Rather, it attempts to provide, at best, a general and broad picture of the 69 femicide clients who came to the attention of the Center. It is analogous to viewing an intricate painting from a distance, where only the general form can be discriminated.

The client who came to the attention of the Center is basically an economically deprived unmarried teenager or young woman (14 – 30 years-old). One could not predict the district (West Bank) from which she comes, although one could determine the probability of her domicile (village, city, camp, badia) from the general demographic pattern existing in the West Bank. Consequently, one would expect the client to come from a village more than any other place of residence.

The “typical” client that received the services of the Center was referred generally for reasons associated with sexual abuse, and possibly was subjected to

multiple abuses. Furthermore, the client is in a state of distress primarily because she believes that she will be killed (level one femicide), especially if the abuse is disclosed. The theme of being killed is of paramount concern to the client.

The client reaching the Center is likely to be threatened mostly by her immediate family (nuclear and extended), close male relatives being the most probable candidates. The party posing the most threat to the client also serves as one of the most important addresses of seeking help for the client. There is also a reasonable probability that the client may have sought the help of the police.

The profile also indicates that a combination (therapeutic, legal, medical) of strategies, primarily therapeutic, are required in order to provide assistance to the threatened female. Furthermore, the helper is expected to use innovative and unconventional strategies if she expects to succeed in her efforts. Finally, the helper should anticipate a multitude of expected and unexpected obstacles to hinder her intervention strategies.

Section Three: Clinical Analysis of Cases

Introduction

This section should be interpreted within a general framework that characterizes Palestinian society in general, and its attitudes towards victims of abuse in particular. Furthermore, it also should be remembered that addressing and dealing with abuses perpetrated against women is a nascent (5-8 years) phenomenon within Palestinian society. Hence, public debate on the issue is in its infancy, and any resulting analysis of the issue is heavily burdened with social and political sensitivities.

The social structure of contemporary Palestinian society is bifurcated according to gender (male versus female) and age (old versus young), where older males occupy the pinnacle of the social pyramid, and young females its base. Consequently, Palestinian women are identified in terms of their relationship or association with the other (male relative) rather than the self; and which, in turn, is reflected in the perceptions and attitudes of Palestinian males towards females: Females are the possessions of Palestinian males. Hence, they are expected to be obedient, discrete, and avid defenders of their families irrespective of their personal feelings or the sacrifices required of them. It will be demonstrated later how these perceptions and attitudes can hinder the therapeutic strategies chosen to aid the victims of femicide. It should be noted here that analyzed cases in this section are those which reached the Social Unit and Al-Aman hot-line in the WCLAC during the period June, 1998 to June, 1999. Included within this analysis are the femicide cases treated by the Social Unit as of June, 1998.

The overwhelming majority of cases reached the Center when the problem has reached an advanced stage (i.e., not immediately following its onset). It appears that the Center becomes an address for abused females when other alternatives (e.g., intervention by other parties) have failed to address the threat of femicide, the female finds herself in a predicament (e.g., pregnant), or other parties (e.g., police) are in a quandary regarding what to do with females in distress (e.g., runaways). This situation placed immense responsibility on helpers to find a suitable intervention that will not compromise the safety of the client. It became extremely difficult for helpers to assess in the initial stage of involvement (intake) which strategies could be viable, and which could lead to the death of the client. The dilemma was aggravated by their knowledge that any action or inaction they take could jeopardize their client's safety.

Prior to presenting a clinical analysis of the cases, we believe it is worthwhile to give the reader a glimpse of the difficulties victims (in her own voice) face. Hence, the following case is presented in the hope that the reader will be given an opportunity to experience what one client has experienced.

The following is a recount of Maha's (14 year-old) ordeal:

“When I first called for your help, I was suffocating from fear. I felt I was in a state of total loss, nothing to live for, nothing to hope for. I tried many times to commit suicide, but failed. I have been in this state of loss since I was ten. Perhaps the word ‘fear’ cannot express my feeling; it is rage, sadness, loss, and many other

nameless things. When I became 14 I began to struggle with myself – to search for someone to share my tragedy. I told my teacher how my brother and uncle abused me sexually. I was very young, and did not realize what was going on. My uncle has not stopped abusing me since then. I begged him so many times not to hurt me, that he should be ashamed to do this, especially since he lived amongst us - especially since my father sheltered him in our house. The older we grew, the more vicious and frightening he became. I knew that the moment I will tell my parents about the abuse, I will be considered dead. I lived for such a long time in conflict with myself. Although I wanted to tell my parents about the abuse so they will kill me and relieve me of my pain, I never gathered the courage to tell them. My voice remained silent even when I stood in front of them to speak. Fear, threat, and deep sadness surrounded me all the time. I tried to hide my fears in school; I showed everyone how strong I was to prevent them from noticing what was going on inside me. Until now, no one knows the pain I feel inside me. One night, however, my uncle grabbed me when I was returning to bed from the bathroom at night. He started to hurt me again, and I fought back with all my strength for the first time. I screamed but no one heard me. No one heard the struggle that went on in the dark. I felt filthy, hurt, and abused as usual. I decided this time that I can't take it any longer; I am in dire need of help – not knowing whom or how...But I needed to share my pain with someone who will listen, believe, and understand me. Although I always felt there was no way out for me, I also felt the need to voice it out.

Before I told you about my problem, I was not alive at all. I was like a robot – doing what I was told to do – knowing one day I will be killed – like all bad girls who did bad and shameful things. After your intervention, and after the abuse was stopped about a year ago, I feel different. Yes, I managed to face him. Yes, I managed to fulfill my wishes and dreams, but where am I heading? What future do I have now that my family knows everything? How will I live my life, if I have one? These questions are as difficult for me as my previous fears from speaking out.”

Major Obstacles and Issues Confronting Helpers

1. Life of Client Remaining Under Perpetual Threat

One of the most disturbing issues that helpers encountered during their support of the victims of femicide was that the threat of a client losing her life was never lifted from the moment she addressed the social worker. It was extremely difficult for the helper to provide assistance and support to the victims of abuse while being cognizant that the client may lose her life at any moment. Moreover, the continuous fear of being killed caused the clients to hesitate in seeking the aid of the helper in times of crises. Hence, the helper remained on a 24-hour virtual call in order to ensure the maximum safety accorded to the life of the client. The following case serves as an excellent example:

A 17 year-old female called the hot-line seeking help to end the constant abuse and sexual harassment she was subjected to by her father. She stated that she had sought the help of her uncle and school social worker but to no avail. The helper learned from the client that she also wrote a letter to the District Governor beseeching him to end the increasing abuse and harassment to which she was subjected.

Unfortunately, her cry for help from various sources did not bring about an end to her ordeal. The helper decided to take drastic measures against the abusive father, realizing that he may inflict harm on his daughter if he learned that she sought help from an external source. Mapping the social system of the client revealed that the family was aware of what was occurring, but blamed the client for the sexual harassment of the father. They justified the abuse by the (seductive) manner in which the client dressed and spoke to her father. The client felt extremely depressed as the result of the family's refusal to put an end to the father's abusive behavior. She stated that members of the family leave her in the house alone with her father knowingly that he plans to undress and abuse her sexually. The family, including the mother, did not take the abuse seriously because she remained a "virgin".

The problem had severe psychological effects on the client that were expressed primarily in hysterical reactions (weakness in arms and legs). The helper, however, faced a major dilemma. Disclosure of the scope and nature of the abuse to members of the family (brother and mother), as perceived by the helper and client, could lead to ending the abuse. Both, however, felt that disclosure of the abuse to the family could be fatal. Although the helper felt the urgent need of the client to be assisted, she had to contemplate all potential actions in terms of their effect on the safety and well-being of the client. Hence, both action (available alternatives) and inaction could jeopardize the life of the client.

The client telephoned the helper one night to inform her that her father was threatening (yielding a pistol in his hand) to kill her if she refused to "cooperate". The helper, after consulting with the client, decided to take a radical measure: She telephoned the District Governor's office and requested their assistance and protection to reach the client's home. The helper led a group of the Governor's security guards during the night and entered the victim's house. The presence of the Governor's security guards made the mission possible, although it enraged the family and made them act in a hostile manner towards the group. The helper had a long and obtuse discussion with the family, confronting them with the fact they were aware of the abuse, consciously denied it, and refused to assist the victim. The client had the courage that night to tell her mother for the first time that she failed and refused to help her. The father was taken to the Governor's office whereby he was taken into custody. He was not released until the father, uncle (father's brother) and mother signed a contract committing themselves to the safety and security of the victim. The helper, however, wondered if the family would honor their commitment, or would they await an opportune moment to take the life of the victim. The apprehensions associated with the intervention steps taken forced the helper to work closely with the family. She met with the client on a regular basis to ensure her safety and life. Furthermore, she lobbied the family, advocated for the victim, and identified an older brother and sister as potential sources of support for the client. Her efforts to enlarge the safety net of the client were fruitful in recruiting the brother and sister to serve as addresses for the client in emergencies, thus reducing the risks to which the client will be subjected. In addition, the helper remained in contact with the extended family, mainly the uncle who was committed to the safety of the victim. Although the victim is alive and attending school, we believe that the threat of femicide has been reduced but not lifted in spite of the actions taken by the helper, Governor, and the family.

2. Pros and Cons of Involving the Family in the Intervention Process

As shown in the previous section, clients and helpers were reluctant to seek the help of family members for fear of incurring further harm and victimization on the victim. The complexity of sexual abuse cases, or cases in which the client's sexual behavior is questioned, renders family participation a two-edged sword as could be shown in the following case:

A client was referred to the Center because she was sexually abused by her brother. The helper felt that the parents must be informed about the abuse. The parents (especially father), however, were extremely perturbed by the knowledge that their son is sexually abusing their daughter. The disclosure caused emotional havoc and pain to the family. The father felt he had failed to help his daughter, and suggested to her to commit suicide. He also tried several times to kill the abusive brother. Finally, the father decided to gather all the family members and commit collective suicide (burning) in order to "solve the problem". Fortunately, his decision was not carried out.

Informing the parents of the abuse not only affected their perception towards themselves and their daughter, it also affected the victim's perception of herself. She stated: "One thing that happened to me after we informed my parents is that I feel very depressed and sad. Yes, it is true that my brother won't abuse me anymore. I always wanted the abuse to stop, but I feel now that I am abused daily by my mother's glances...She is blaming me for destroying the family. I am abused by how my father perceives me now. I was his favorite daughter before he knew about the abuse. He always believed that I am smart and intelligent. Today, he pities me. I feel that he looks at me only as a victim, and sometimes as a criminal. Yes...I do feel very strong today. I managed to stop the abuse, but I also know that I created a new kind of abuse...I am abused because I brought shame and dishonor to the family. I am no more a virgin...and that makes my existence meaningless. I feel like I am a living death."

The above case demonstrates the complexity and dilemma of involving family members in the intervention strategy. Although it could lead to the cessation of the abusive situation, it causes enormous pain to the victim and family. The helper, in this case, decided to work on three levels in order to reduce the pain and suffering of the victim. The first level involved working with the victim on a regular basis. During the initial period of disclosure, we worked very closely (two to three times a week) with the victim to preclude her from committing suicide, or her family from taking her life. The second level was to work with both parents on a regular weekly basis. The parents signed an agreement which committed them to meet with the helper once a week to assess the situation at home. This step aided the helper to open a dialogue with family members and promoted their support to the victim. The issues of understanding without blaming and supporting without punishing were topics of discussion during the initial meetings with the family. Later, when both parents felt closer to the helper, they were able to talk about their feelings and reactions to the abuse. It should be noted here that such an outcome could not have been achieved without the compulsory participation of the parents. The family's future was of main concern to the parents, and it became a focal point in the family therapy meetings. The third level of intervention was working with the rapist (brother). The decision to give counseling to the rapist was an arduous task. The

existing cultural context transformed the public disclosure of the abuse to a “social lynching” of the victim. Hence, the helper needed to think about alternatives other than the punitive-legal one. To pursue a legal-punitive course, within the existing cultural context, meant that the disclosure will be transformed into a social scandal. Hence, this course of intervention would be unacceptable to the victim and her family. A paralegal agreement was agreed upon in which the brother would be imprisoned for a limited period without being charged with committing incest. Furthermore, the rapist was forbidden to enter the house, and found employment in a distant area. Hence, the only sound, “logical,” and humane alternative was to work with the family and victim to search for ways to reduce the pain inflicted on the victim.

The removal of the rapist from the home, we believe, allowed the helper and family to deal with and overcome the obstacles and problems that surfaced following the disclosure of the abuse to the (parents) family. The measure, however, generated negative reactions within the mother. She loved her son immensely and pitied him for “not being able to come home, eat a hot meal and take a shower”. The mother’s reaction produced psychological and emotional pressures on the victim to the point where she attempted suicide on two different occasions. Once more, we see how involving parents in the intervention strategy, especially in the short-term, creates much pain and sadness to all family members, including young children. For example, the younger (five years old) daughter asked the helper to bring back her older brother because she missed him. The rapist also was put in a very delicate situation. He kept mentioning that disclosure of the abuse made him lose his parents for ever. He stated: “After the disclosure, I feel I lost my family. I lost the most precious thing a man has...the support and care of his own family. My father doesn’t respect me any more, and I failed to be there for my Mom - the only person I love.” The father stated once: “He not only raped my daughter, he raped all of us...and we are no longer a family”.

Cases of femicide are heavily loaded with various undeniable moral and ethical dilemmas. The fact that the rapist did not receive his due legal punishment could lead to an impression that one could commit a rape, enter therapy, and is exonerated. However, pursuing such a course of action would lead to the “social murder” of the victim and her family. The fear of social scandal and shame prompted the victim and family to opt for a different mode of punishing the rapist. The question remains, however, whether such “punishment”, if at all, is the best alternative offered by the existing socio-cultural norms and values? We believe that helpers should continually search for better methods of dealing with such abuses, provided that victims are not used as vehicles for social change. Plans for social action should never use the individual to promote or enhance social and legal changes.

3. Dilemma of Utilizing Social Control Agents in Intervention Strategies

In addition to the dilemmas raised when working with clients and family members, as seen in the two previous components, we found that involving (solicited or voluntary) various social control agents in the intervention strategy could highly complicate matters. In general, dealing with abused women requires clear social policies, and social resources that cater to the specific needs of abused females. The current research (as other research conducted by the project director) showed that

representatives of social control agents were very reluctant to deal with abuses inflicted upon women, especially sexual abuses. The need to evade responsibility, deny the existence of the abuse, blame the victim, or define the victim as a criminal, are just a few examples of the “running away” policy of social control agents. The following case illustrates the point.

A 14 year-old female was taken to hospital by her parents because of abdominal pain. She was examined previously by the village physician who did not inform the parents that their daughter was pregnant, but referred them to the hospital. The hospital staff did not inform the parents that their daughter was experiencing labor pains, and requested them to leave her there and return the second day. Once the baby was delivered, the hospital staff referred the child-mother to the police, accusing her of fornication. The police, confused and not knowing what to do, incarcerated the victim and requested the assistance of the hot-line. When the parents returned to the hospital the second day, they were informed by the hospital guards that their daughter had given birth to a child. The victim, it was learned consequently, had been sexually abused by her brother.

The reaction of the social control agent(s) in this case led not only to the revictimization of the victim, but also caused a social scandal before the parents became aware of the abuse. Furthermore, the lack of sensitivity by the social control agents to the cultural values pertaining to the sexuality of women caused the victim to experience a serious life trauma. The parents refused to have their daughter returned to her (their) home, state officials refused to allow the helpers of the Center to see her, and she was placed (imprisoned) in a nearby institution for her “protection”. It was clear to the helpers that the various social control agents were more concerned with protecting their interests rather than the interests of the victim. The imprisonment of the victim was borne out of the need to “protect socially accepted values and norms, and to prevent the outbreak of disturbances” as expressed by the Head of the Police Department handling the case.

It is difficult to state that social control agents are incapable of supporting female victims of abuse, but such help and support should be in favor of the victim’s welfare. The major dilemma mentioned by the various service providers is whether the victim’s welfare could be addressed without it being in contradiction with the welfare of society at large. The clinical analyses of the cases show that agents of social control could be of help in the same degree to which they could cause harm to the victim and the abusive situation. The clinical interventions, however, showed that existing resources could be of immense benefit to the victim if utilized properly (This is a very intricate issue that should be discussed extensively). In one case, the involvement of a Muslim cleric assisted the helper to preclude the family from killing the victim. In another case, the involvement of police officers also served to create a protective cocoon to the victim. Hence, proper utilization and direction of social control agent (e.g., teachers, medical staff, tribal notables, etc.) could be of benefit to victims.

It should be reiterated here that official social control agents (e.g., psychiatrists, medical personnel, police, prosecutors) remain to be reluctant to be involved or deal with cases associated with the abuse of women. Our clinical experience has shown they prefer that such abuses be dealt with in the traditional prevailing manner. They tend to rely on tribal methods such as imposing marriage

of the victim to her rapist, concealing or nullifying the abuse, or denying that a female came to seek their assistance. In a discussion with a very prominent welfare worker, the helper asked the Ministry of Welfare to handle a case of a young woman who ran away from her home out of fear that her brother will kill her. The family suspected that she is having a romantic relationship with a man, and one brother tried to kill her with a knife. The helper was unable to find a safe shelter for the victim, and requested the assistance of a welfare official. The response of the official, however, was: “We know this is a real problem, and I am aware that we have tens of girls and women who need a safe haven, but we have nothing to offer...Let them find a way to solve their problems. We, as a Ministry, are not yet ready to deal with such issues...We have other priorities”.

Social control agents not only shirk their responsibility when faced with or fear such problems, they are also reluctant to take steps to combat such crimes. This nullification of responsibility is alarming, and it could only be combated (as reflected in the studied cases) by involving a greater number of organizations (state-official, and NGO) in the complex reality of abused women to expose the “run away” policy of official and non-official service providers. They could participate in the search for more humane, legal and non-legal, official and non-official methods of intervention only after they acknowledge the complexity and sensitivity of the problem.

4. Dilemmas Emanating From the Political Context of Palestine: How Political is Femicide?

The unique situation (social and political transformation) of Palestinian society has affected tremendously the social and political reaction to female abuse. Three main political issues confronted helpers in coping with femicide cases:

A. It was felt that a security “panic and hysteria” is created whenever a case of female abuse emerges or is confronted. The analysis of the studied cases shows that members of the security apparatus (e.g., police, internal police, intelligence) often suspected the presence of political conspiracy behind cases of femicide. In a case involving a client who ran away from her family (she believed that her family was planning to kill her), the Head of the Police, as well as the head of the extended family, suspected that she was involved in a security matter. The Mukhtar stated: “There is no way that a woman of her age (unmarried 27 year-old) would run away from home simply because her family used physical violence against her. It is much more than that...I personally think she is involved in some security issue...Perhaps she is a collaborator.” The position of the local Mukhtar discouraged other state officials from offering help to the abused woman. This behavior could be interpreted in two ways: Social control agents could be using the “security” factor as a pretext to evade their responsibility, or to justify their opposition to the changes taking place regarding the status of women. For example, one police officer stated: “Our enemy is using women to fight us. The fact that women are asking for equal rights is placing the security of Palestinians in jeopardy. Women should help men by adhering to social norms, not by adopting norms offered by the West or the enemy. Do you realize how many women were used by the Israelis in order to put us down and ridicule us as a nation?”. The fear of some social control agents that women will be used by the enemy to sabotage the national Palestinian cause complicated and politicized efforts to combat femicide.

B. The second factor is related to the existing political/security status of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Given that the political position of the PNA is in a formative stage, clear lines of responsibility and authority (especially in the realm of security matters) have not been developed. Each security apparatus feels that it has the authority to intervene in matters it perceives to fall within its jurisdiction. The nebulousness of the term “security” encourages this rivalry between various security apparatuses. Hence, helpers were faced with the problem of whom to address when a femicide case requires the assistance of the state. The police were found to be not the sole address when victims needed protection. The power and influence of a given security apparatus within a given region, and the social and political accessibility of a security official play a major role in which apparatus one should seek. Hence, helpers needed to be knowledgeable of the social, political, and security rivalries operating within the client’s environment before addressing and seeking the assistance of a particular (e.g., police, preventive security, Force 17, etc) security apparatus.

C. The third factor is related to the political status of East Jerusalem. Israel claims sole sovereignty over East Jerusalem, while the PNA considers it to be an occupied territory. Israeli officials do not leave any circumstance in which they do not assert this claim, and challenge all efforts by the PNA to undermine their claimed sovereignty over that portion of Jerusalem. Furthermore, the Israelis neglect and are reluctant to provide civil and police services to the Palestinian population living in East Jerusalem in the same manner they provide the Israeli inhabitants of West Jerusalem. Hence, the Israeli and the Palestinian police are reluctant to help and assist femicide victims from East Jerusalem for different reasons. The Palestinians do not desire to create a political storm with the Israelis while the peace negotiations are in progress. The Israelis, on the other hand, do not consider East Jerusalem a priority in terms of services or expenditure.

One of the three clients who lost her life came from East Jerusalem. It became apparent that the victim sought the assistance of the Israeli police when she was viciously abused by her father. Despite the serious apparent physical injuries incurred on the victim, the Israeli police returned her home to the abuser. The victim then sought the assistance of the Center and a District Governor. The Governor’s decision was to solve the problem in a tribal fashion. He and a religious notable agreed that the victim be returned to her home. The Israeli police and the Governor’s office felt insulted when the Center contacted them in order to follow-up on the case. The client was killed two months later.

5. Handling Suspicions, Gossips and Rumors

Another obstacle that confronted helpers and victims was the problem of rumors and suspicions. Femicide victims were faced continuously with the fear of being victims of gossips and rumors as shown in the following case:

Three sisters were home imprisoned by their father for more than three years because he suspected that one of his daughters (16 year-old) was having a romantic affair with a young man of her age. The father’s suspicions caused him to forbid his other daughters from leaving the house. He feared that gossip would shame the family. It also was learned from a relative and a letter written by one of the victims that they were threatened of being killed if they leave the house or disobey their father. One of the sisters was burned and heavily scarred by the father two years

previously. The three sisters were searching for a solution to rid them of their ordeal, but they were afraid that their father's suspicions, or the ensuing gossip and rumors in the village, would lead to their death. Living as virtual prisoners in their home under constant fear and suffering from abuse was the focal concern of the helper. Not only was the helper faced with limited alternatives, the victims' fear of causing gossip precluded them from cooperating with the helper to search for alternative methods of intervention. Unfortunately, we were unable to remove them from this predicament.

In other cases, the parents frequently mentioned that if the rapist is punished, it would start unending gossips and rumors in the community. It is worthy of mentioning that the mother of an 18 year-old pregnant girl who was sexually abused by her brother-in-law refused to inform the father for fear he will inform his second wife who will initiate gossips and rumors about the event. In a similar case, the father of an abused 14 year-old daughter refused to take her back home in fear of the ensuing rumors if the abuse were disclosed. He beseeched social agencies to institutionalize her. He stated: "I will be willing to visit and bring her things, but I need people to stop gossiping. I have five other daughters that I need to take care of. I really want to consider her dead, and to tell people that she is dead in order to end the rumors and gossips. I will be able to help my family survive."

Gossips and rumors were major obstacles to providing assistance and support to victims of femicide. Gossips and rumors were found to be not only one mechanism that reinforced the subordination and discrimination of women, but also was used to revictimize the clients. We believe that helpers and social activists should discuss how to deal with and combat this vicious method of abuse and control of females.

6. Sexual Harassment: A No-Man's Land Issue

The way social control agents (formal or informal) treated and reacted to sexual harassment was another issue that hindered femicide victims from living without the threat of death. One of the findings of the research project showed that most victims of sexual abuse were also sexually harassed. Furthermore, no one took their complaints seriously as shown in the previously discussed cases – a situation which encouraged offenders to further abuse and, in some cases, actually rape the female. For example, a 16 year-old female asked the help of a school teacher to stop an abuser from disturbing her (He was following her, using offensive sexual language, molesting her in a taxi). The reaction of the teacher was to call her a "whore". He summoned the father to inform him about the "dishonoring" behavior of his daughter. When the helper contacted the teacher in order to understand his behavior, he stated: "No woman in our culture dares to come to a man (the teacher) to inform him about such matters. It only reflects who she is, and not who is the other party...Could you tell me why he did it to her and not to others?" In other cases, the family forbade its daughters from going to school or leave their home environment if they heard about an act of sexual harassment. Furthermore, the police often blamed the victim who filed a complaint of sexual abuse. In one extreme situation, a brother threatened to kill his sister when she complained to the police that she was being sexually harassed in the street. The girl was incarcerated in order to "protect" her from being killed.

It is claimed here that sexual harassment poses a catch 22 situation for females. They face negative reactions irrespective of whether they confront or not

confront the harassment. The helper is also placed in a dilemma. Her assistance to the victim in combating sexual harassment could lead to reactions by her family which may result in placing restrictions on her freedom such as freedom of movement, education, and choice of a husband.

Concluding Remarks

We learn that offering help or empowering victims of femicide becomes an impossible mission in view of the dilemmas and obstacles discussed in this section. Social reaction (family, society, social control agents) to the abuse not only silences and mutes the victim's pain and voice, it complicates things further. The helping process within such a context is entrapped from all angles. Despite these multiple traps, helpers kept searching for new and unconventional methods of intervention. We saw, for example, how helpers used a cellular phone to assist a pregnant victim. They tried to maintain her at home during her pregnancy in order to prevent the father from discovering the pregnancy if she leaves the house, and consequently kill her. Keeping her at home also carried the risk that the father may discover the pregnancy. Providing the victim with a cellular phone, buying her new large-sized dresses, and working with the support and constant communication with the mother helped to save her life. This is just one example of the various methods used to stop the exclusion of victims from engaging in normal social activities. Helpers may be required to generate other ideas, find more sources of support, and develop a better understanding of the intricacy of the issues at hand. The challenge we face is how to expand the circle of individuals, professionals, groups, legislators, and service providers decrease the number of obstacles that face helpers and victims.

Section Four: Dealing With Femicide Through The Tribal System

Rationale for Including Tribal System

Palestinians have never been accorded the opportunity to govern themselves throughout their contemporary history. The advent of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), as the result of the Oslo Agreement in 1993, provided them with limited rule but not political sovereignty. Civil, family, and social disputes have been relegated historically by the ruling authority, whether colonial (e.g., British), custodial (Jordanian), or occupier (Israeli), to the tribal system. Hence, Palestinian society was precluded from the natural transformation from being collective to being individuated; and, thus, remained heavily seeped in tribal tradition. Furthermore, the extensive experience of the Center has shown that society at large, including the PNA, turns to the tribal system in cases of femicide. It became imperative for us, therefore, to include this system within our study, and attempt to examine the perception(s) that guide tribal heads in their treatment of the femicide cases coming to their attention.

Selected Sample

Tribal heads are neither elected nor appointed officials. Instead, they develop within the tribe, and are chosen by practice as a result of their renown, power, and reputation. The most respected, powerful, and renowned tribal heads are entrusted to deal with the most difficult of social problems and disputes (e.g., femicide and killings). Furthermore, it is purported that the Hebron area includes the highest number of renowned tribal reconciliatory heads in Palestinian society. Hence, although it was decided that various tribal heads will be interviewed, we focused on the Hebron District whereby we interviewed tribal heads who were willing to meet with us and discuss the subject-matter. Our efforts resulted in interviewing 20 reconciliatory notables and tribal judges distributed geographically within the central (Ramallah - Jerusalem - Bethlehem Districts) and southern (Hebron District) regions of the West Bank.

Data Collection

Given the fluidity of the subject-matter at hand (cognitive perception and mentality), it was decided that semi-structured interviews will yield the most abundant and rich data, especially if the interviewer relied on probing techniques during the interview process. Each interview was conducted in a “relaxed” but semi-formal “atmosphere”. Although the interviewer(s) were accorded the status of a “guest”, a culturally normative behavior, they guided the discussion by focusing on the main research questions, and utilized probing techniques to clarifying the dialogue. Notes recorded by the interviewer(s) constituted the only method of documentation. Final and expanded documentation, however, was recorded only after the interviews were terminated, and a thorough assessment of the interview has been made by the project staff. This strategy was adopted because some of the interviewees were reluctant to

have their responses recorded, while others demanded our full attention while they were speaking. Specifically, the interviewer(s) focused on the following parameters:

- (A). What is the scope of the problem?
- (B). What role do tribal notables play when cases of femicide are brought to their attention?
- (C). Where does the onus of responsibility lie according to the perception of the tribal notables?
- (D). Do they believe that killing women constitutes a problem?
- (E). What should be done to deal with the problem of killing women if it exists?

Findings

Sources of Tribal Law

The tribal notables were in consensus that ancient (pre-Islamic) customs, Islamic Shari'a (canon), and civil (i.e., legislated) law constitute the three fundamental foundations for tribal law and adjudication. Although books have been written about tribal law, it is neither recorded nor referenced formally. It is governed, however, by a set of flexible rules, procedures, and rituals. The implementation of tribal law, however, is predicated on the degree of financial and/or social power/influence one has; i.e., the size and power of his tribe. Consequently, one could observe a wide spectrum of variability in the manner and outcome of the cases treated.

Prevalence of Utilizing the Tribal System

The interviews with the tribal notables clearly show that society turns to the tribal system to settle its disputes. This trend is further strengthened in cases dealing with what is termed "family honor". They reported that their influence and power has increased since the advent of the PNA, and that security officials seek their assistance in cases of social dispute, especially those involving breaches of "family honor. This claim was corroborated during our interviews with officials representing the various security apparatuses. Hence, it could be stated with a degree of confidence that the tribal system not only is alive, but also is quite active in the social disputes of society. One notable tribal judge from the Jerusalem area affirmed this perception by stating: "(civil) laws cannot fulfill the needs of the tribes. We cannot do without tribal law. Jordan was unable to do it. Only when we have an Islamic state we will have no further need for tribal law". The interviews conducted with the tribal notables and corroborated by police officers, district governors, and forensic specialists point to the pervasive utility of tribal law, and which they attribute to the following reasons:

- (A). The ineptness and marginalization of the formal judicial system in cases related to the sexuality of women.
- (B). The inexperience of the newly formed Palestinian police in dealing

with cases of femicide.

- (C). The existence of various security apparatuses that fail to intervene in such cases for historical and cultural reasons.

Tribal Principles Governing Femicide

Although tribal judges and notables deal with an array of social disputes, they perceived violations against one's "'ardh" (sexual purity of females) or "'ardh" (land) as the most serious, "'ardh" being the most sensitive. It should be noted here that the tribal notables equated land with "'ardh"; both are perceived in Arab culture as valued possessions in need of protection. Hence, they stated that violations committed against them ('ardh and ard) wreak shame on the family (i.e., males) if not avenged. The gravity and sensitivity of violations against one's 'ardh can carry potential social instability having far-reaching implications. Consequently, tribal notables try to expedite the resolution of such cases, often to the detriment of the basic rights of those involved, especially females suspected of committing acts that tarnish the "honor" of their families. Hence, tribal judges are often guided by the principle expressed best in the social adage: "El-'ardh ma 'allieha shuhoud" ("ardh does not require witnesses). This attitude is quite contrary to Islamic principles governing such cases. A woman cannot be accused of fornication under Islamic principles unless four credible adults bear witness that they observed her in the act of coitus. Furthermore, the tribal notables reported that their actions were governed by the principles of "sutra" and "dabdabeh" when they face cases of femicide in order to prevent "fitneh".

"Sutra" is the act of draping something from view. Tribal judges stressed that their first priority is to ensure that a female suspected or perceived of committing sexual transgressions is not subjected to scandal; i.e., is in need of sutra. They search for methods to provide "sutra" to females whose reputation has been tarnished or threatened. It should be noted here that sutra is practiced only when the perceived violation has not been disclosed (became public knowledge). Forced marriage, often to the male accused of violating the sexuality of the female, is the most common practice mentioned to achieve sutra. Otherwise, the female is expected not to voice objections if the husband chosen for her is old, handicapped, or has other wives. It was reported that women tend to accept marriage from the male chosen for her in these cases because she is perceived by society (and often by her self) as a "damaged" (kharbanneh) person. It was found that, often, sutra is ultimately achieved by "killing" the female. If the family discovers or perceives that one of its female members has "tarnished" its honor, it does not take immediate action for fear that it will lead to a scandal (opposite of sutra). Instead the family awaits an opportune moment where it takes the life of the female under the pretext that she fell from the roof, or committed suicide, or accidentally ingested poison. It was repeated throughout the interviews that many females have been "killed" and no record of their death is made. It was also found that some females were killed and forged death certificates were issued by the Mukhtar (village head) to show they had died from natural or unknown causes. Females are expected to "defend" their honor, even if it costs them their lives. For example, a female who was subjected to an attempt of rape by a police officer threw herself in front of a moving vehicle in order to defend her honor. The offending police officer was transferred to another district. Another

female threw herself from a moving vehicle after a male attempted to rape her. Although she was killed as the result of the act, the offender was imprisoned for two months following a tribal court's decision that his family pay monetary compensation of five thousand Jordan Dinars (seven thousand US Dollars) to the victim's family.

It was mentioned in more than ten interviews that many methods could be used to "get rid" of a female who tarnishes the honor of her family. One tribal notable stated: "Do you think it is difficult to get rid of a woman who violated her honor or the honor of her family?" One other tribal notable stated: "Women in this society know very well that behaving contrary to social norms could very well lead to their death, and no one will hold the killer responsible for his act. To the contrary, he will be seen as honorable, "shihim" (upholding one's dignity), and a man who does not tolerate that his wife, sister, or women behave in a fashion unacceptable to him". They provided an example in which a man killed (slay) his wife when he found her in bed with another man. He was imprisoned for a "short" period, and the family of the husband did not request a "atweh" (tribal assurance for not seeking revenge) from the family of the wife.

"Dabdabeh" is the act of preventing a scandalous situation from further deterioration. It is generally achieved through cover-up techniques. It is best described by a proverb that was quoted often by the tribal notables during the interviews: "El-khammeh ma ilha illa el-tammeh" (the best way to treat filth is to bury it). The following case of a raped three-year-old girl exemplifies this practice.

A three-year-old girl was raped brutally by a male relative of her mother. Family vendetta (against father) and political considerations were reasons (rumors) given for the rape. The case became public knowledge when it was brought to the attention of one of the security apparatuses in the Palestinian National Authority. Furthermore, the leading tribal judges in the region were called to bring the problem to a resolution. The gravity of the case led the PNA to prosecute the case in the State Security Court where a hasty trial was conducted and the perpetrator sentenced to life imprisonment. The speedy trial and sentencing was taken to avert blood shed between the two families involved. The state, however, was cognizant that unless quick retribution is brought to the "honor" of the injured family (not victim) community strife within the village will destabilize social order. Hence, the tribal system was called upon to fulfill that function. The tribal judges acted expeditiously by circumventing the usual arguments of the case and relied on the adage that no witnesses are required for cases of "ardh. It was sufficient for them to hear that the victim recognized her assailant. Consequently, the tribal judges studied the merits of the case and ruled that the victim's family be awarded over one million Jordan Dinars in damages, in addition to draping the victim's house and the road leading to it in white cloth (a gesture to signify that the girl's honor had not been tarnished). It should be noted here that the original sum was reduced to approximately forty thousand J.D. The state, society (tribal), and families of both parties "cooperated" to bring this crisis to a quick resolution; i.e., avoided blood shed and social instability. The welfare of the victim, however, was sacrificed in this process.

The practice of "dabdabeh" was well executed in this case. When it was no longer possible to achieve "sutra", "dabdabeh" became the second line of defense. It was the vehicle by which society avoided "fitneh" or social sedition. The State sacrificed the right of due process of the accused when it tried him in the State

Security Court, but it felt that it was successful in preventing “fitneh”. The tribal judges sacrificed the welfare and rights of the victim, but they believed they avoided “fitneh”.

Dabdabeh can also encompass sutra. For example, a groom discovered that his extremely beautiful 14 year-old bride was not a virgin; she had been subjected to incest when she was a child. The bride was divorced at a later (opportune) date, and wedded to another man. The essential gist of this case is that the female was not a virgin; it mattered little that she lost her virginity as a result of incest. Marrying her to another man was a means of providing sutra for her, and dabdabeh for her family.

Prevalence of Phenomenon

Given that sutra is of prime consideration in femicide cases, it becomes speculative at best to ascertain its prevalence in the community. We have seen in the previous section how “hidden” femicide is practiced for the sake of sutra. The interviews conducted with the tribal notables clearly show that “tens of females” are “neutralized” (killed) each year without proper or no documentation. Hence, one must view the official number (documented) of femicide cases with extreme caution.

Reasons Given for Femicide

Although tribal notables attributed the practice of femicide to the general rubric of what is termed family honor, the interviews showed clearly that a wide spectrum of behaviors characterize this interpretation. These reasons ranged from speaking to a male stranger to infidelity by a wife. One female was said to have been killed by her brother because he suspected she had an affair with a male (she smiled when she saw her alleged lover). Sometimes, the female is “framed” by others. For example, one married woman thought the presence of her sister-in-law (wife of her husband’s brother) has a negative effect on her relationship with her husband. Consequently, she claimed and spread the rumor that her sister-in-law had an extra-marital relationship with another man. The false claim led to the death of the sister-in-law. In a more sinister case, a female was subjected to incest by her paternal uncle, and conceived from him. The family attempted to conceal the crime (achieve sutra) by marrying her to another man. When the husband discovered that his wife was pregnant, he killed her in collusion with her mother.

Irrespective of the reason given for the femicide, the tribal notables were prone to sympathize with the offender and “accept” claims levied against a woman. It was apparent from the interviews that tribal notables did not examine critically the soundness of the evidence presented to them. This tendency was expressed cogently by a noted tribal judge. “Whenever a woman is suspected of anything, it is a sign that she has done something grievous. I question the woman to determine the validity of what she says to me. I have the ability to determine if a woman is lying or telling the truth. My experience has shown me that I can tell the truth by looking in her eye. In the absolute majority of cases involving women, the woman’s deviant behavior is the reason for her death. A man does not punish or kill a woman without a reason.”

The tribal notables made it clear that if the family respects itself and honor, it will not hesitate to kill a female member who is suspected of violating the sexual code of behavior acceptable for females. This point takes on added significance when the

concept of “rujuleh” (manhood) is incorporated in the mental perception of the family. One cannot remain a rajul” (man) if he remains silent towards perceived sexual transgressions by his female relatives.

Instruments Used to Commit Femicide

The interviews yielded a wide range of instruments and techniques employed in the practice of femicide. It is difficult to provide a statistical distribution of these instruments, but it will suffice to mention them. Females have been killed by fire arms (pistols, rifles, etc.), sharp instruments (e.g., knives, daggers, machetes), poisons (rat poisoning, pesticide, etc.), strangulation (ropes, wires), drowning (thrown in wells), burning, run-over by motor vehicles, and other techniques. There is no evidence to show what conditions, circumstances, relationships, acculturation, or personality type influence the type of instrument used to commit the femicide.

Perceived Methods of Preventing Femicide

The interviews with the tribal notables clearly showed that one of the major reasons for the prevalence of such crimes (crimes of honor) is the practice of allowing both sexes to mix freely with each other. Furthermore, they stated that freedoms given to the woman, her participation in the work force outside her home, and her increased economic power have contributed to changes in social roles. Consequently, they believed that society has moved away from fundamental Arab and Islamic values and towards Western ones - a process which has led to moral decay. They proposed that a return to traditional roles for men and women and a prohibition on mixing of the sexes to be the best mode to prevent such crimes. For example, one tribal notable suggested polygamy as a prevention tool. Another notable proposed that women be taught “musaiarah” (how to go along with someone in order not to create a problem, although one is not convinced of the idea), diplomacy, and methods of pleasing a man. Furthermore, he suggested that women should not be given open opportunities in the work force because it will lead to a decline in the social status and importance of men.

The traditional role for woman calls upon them to dress according to fundamental and traditional customs in order to prevent “seduction”. The principle guiding the relationship between men and women is summarized in the adage: “If a man and a woman meet, Satan is the third one present”. Hence, the propositions of the tribal notables on how to prevent femicide can be summarized in the following suggestions:

1. Prohibition of mixing between the sexes.
2. Prohibition of women to work outside their homes.
3. Marrying girls at an early age in order that they will not have an opportunity to become “faltat” (loose).
4. Encouraging polygamy.

Section Five : Analysis of Data From Attorney General's Office

The Attorney General was most cooperative with the project staff. Not only he accepted to hold an audience with us on two separate occasions, he permitted us to review the records available in his office to collect the data presented in this section. Often times, we telephoned him to inquire about specific information, or request clarification regarding some issues. Despite this full cooperation from the Attorney General, the staff experienced difficulties in extrapolating data from the available documents due to missing information, or to classification (e.g., fate) that is too broad for specific analysis as depicted in Table 14. An examination of Table 14 yields two

Table 14
Distribution of Reported Suspicious Deaths
(1996 -1998) According to Gender

<u>Year</u>	<u>(Fate)</u>			<u>Murder</u>			<u>Total</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sub-Total</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Unknown*</u>		<u>Sub-Total</u>
1996	87	60	147	30	10	6	46	193
1997	147	74	221	18	11	3	32	253
1998	191	100	291	33	7	2	42	333
Total	425	234	659	81	28	11	120	779

*These are the cases in which the gender of the deceased was not recorded

interesting findings: deaths due to "fate" represent 84.6% of the total number of deaths resulting from suspicious circumstances or criminal (murder) acts. Contrary to our expectations, the number of deaths attributed to "fate" for males (425) was far greater than the number of deaths attributed to the same reason for females (234). This discrepancy could be accounted for in terms of occupational hazards. Men far outnumber women in the work force, especially in hazardous occupations such as construction. Hence, deaths due to occupational accidents are categorized under the rubric of "fate". This interpretation (fate) is cultural-religious rather than legal-professional. Hence, the use of such nomenclature extracts the Attorney General's

office from the professional realm and deposits it in the tribal realm. This interpretation takes on a more serious nature when one examines the trend of these

Table 15
Distribution of Reported Female Deaths Attributed to (Fate) According to
District for the Period 1996 -1998

<u>District</u>	<u>Year</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	
Nablus	7	35	33	75
Ramallah	15	14	9	38
Tulkarim	7	1	17	25
Bethlehem	9	7	8	24
Hebron	5	4	6	15
Jinin	0	13	1	14
Qalqilia	0	0	7	7
Salfit	0	0	5	5
Jericho	3	0	4	7
District Not Documented	14	0	10	24
Total	60	74	100	234

cases within the past three years. The data in the Table indicate that deaths attributed to “fate” nearly doubled between 1996 and 1998. In essence, the problem has been aggravated rather than corrected.

The suspicious deaths of females that are documented under the category of “fate” according to district are depicted in Table 15. An examination of the Table

shows that not only the number of such cases has increased approximately 40% over a three-year period, it is concentrated mostly in the Nablus district. This finding cannot be attributed to demographic distribution. The populations of both the Nablus and Ramallah districts are nearly equal, although the number of deaths attributed to fate in the Ramallah district is about half of that in the Nablus district. It also defies

interpretation within cultural-religious terms. Both Nablus and Hebron districts are noted for their conservatism and religiosity. The number (15) of deaths attributed to fate in the Hebron district is one-fifth the number (75) of deaths attributed to the same reasons in Nablus. Both Nablus and Hebron are noted for their light industries, and consequently, one finds difficulty in attributing the noted discrepancy to variance in occupational accidents.

Table 16
Distribution of Reported Female Deaths Attributed to (Fate)
According to Documented Causes

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Poisoning	6
Burning	3
Falling From Heights	3
Unintentional Cause	2
Electrocution	1
Cerebral Disease	1
Suicide	21
Cause Undocumented	197
Total	234

The noted difficulty in interpreting Table 15 may best be interpreted within the findings shown in Table 16. Only 16 out of 234 cases of female deaths documented under the category of “fate” are specified (e.g., poisoning, electrocution, etc.). The noted difficulty in interpreting Table 15 may best be interpreted within the findings shown in Table 16. Only 16 out of 234 cases of female deaths documented under the category of “fate” are specified (e.g., poisoning, electrocution, etc.). More interesting, however, is the documentation of 21 suicide cases under this rubric. Suicide is considered a “sin” according to Islam. Those who commit suicide are not accorded the religious rights (e.g., prayer over the corpse in the mosque) given to others who die of other causes. Hence, it may appear contradictory to categorize suicide cases under the rubric of “fate” which is tied closely to the will of God.

Table 17
Distribution of Suicide Cases According to District and
Gender for the Period 1996 - 1998

Females				
<u>District</u>	<u>Year</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	
Nablus	3	1	3	7
Ramallah	1	2	1	4
Tulkarim	2	0	0	2
Bethlehem	1	2	0	3
Jericho	0	0	2	2
Salfit	0	0	2	2
District Unknown	0	0	1	1
Total	7	5	9	21

Males	6	4	6	16
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The distribution of suicide cases according to district shown in Table 17 does not reveal significant patterns due to the low number of cases. It does reveal, however, that reported cases of suicide occur with greater frequency amongst females (21) than in males (16). Given that males outnumber females by a margin of two to one in deaths attributed to “fate”, one must question why this trend does not hold true for suicide cases.

Section Six : Analysis of Court Records

Historical Legal Background

Although an amalgamation of laws, rules, and regulations are applicable in the West Bank, the penal justice system is based on the Jordanian Penal Code (Number 16) legislated in 1960. It should be remembered that the West Bank was under the jurisdiction of Jordan during that period. Furthermore, criminal court procedures are also bound by Jordanian law (Number 9, 1961). Examination of the aforementioned penal code reveals that it encompasses articles specific to certain crimes (e.g., crimes associated with honor), while other articles are associated with crime in general. For example, article (340: 1, 2) was legislated to deal specifically with crimes involving the killing of a female on the grounds of what is termed “family honor”. According to article (340: 1), a male who kills or injures his wife or “unlawful” female relative (females whom he is forbidden to marry) is exempted from legal penalty if he apprehends them in the act of fornication with another male. However, the criteria for proving that an act of fornication did take place are very stringent according to Islamic cannon: Four adults must bear oath that they observed the couple in coitus. Article (340: 2), however, states that a male who “surprises” his wife or “unlawful” female relative in bed with another male could benefit from a reduced sentence. It should be noted here that article (340: 1, 2) was derived from Ottoman (1885) and French (1810) laws. Although article (340) is characterized under the rubric of “specific articles”, defense attorneys and judges do not invoke it in cases of crimes committed on the basis of what is termed “family honor” because of its stringent criteria. We have not been able to find evidence to show that article (340: 1, 2) has ever been invoked. Instead, the justice system is “manipulated” in order to invoke the less stringent “general” articles pertaining to crime. Lama Odeh has demonstrated clearly this manipulation by invoking the less stringent general article (98) when such crimes reach the criminal justice system. Under the provisions of article (98), an accused could benefit from a reduced sentence if: (1) the crime was committed while the accused was in a state of rage, (2) the victim committed an act deemed “not within his/her right”, and (3) the act which the victim engaged in constitutes an element of “danger”. Furthermore, the courts relied on other discriminating articles in the penal code to “mute” sexual abuse committed against females. For example, article (308: 1) of the penal code (Number 16, 1960) allows the court to cease legal action or suspend the sentence of an offender who committed a crime on the basis of honor (e.g., rapes a female) if he weds his victim according to a proper marriage contract. The health code (1966) also permits a Mukhtar (village head) to issue a certificate under certain circumstances (e.g., village is remote) stating that the person died a natural death, thus circumventing the need to have the deceased examined and pronounced dead by a licensed physician before the body is allowed to be buried. Our interviews with local Mukhtars confirmed the utilization of this practice. To what extent this practice could be abused to “conceal” cases of femicide is a matter of conjecture. The analyses we provide of the available court records will demonstrate how the practices of the criminal justice system discriminated against females, and manipulated the evidence to the benefit of the offender and the detriment of the victim.

Sources of Data Analyzed

The analyses we present are based on the following sources of data: (A) Jordanian Penal Code (Number 16, 1960), (B) the records of femicide cases dealt with by the Jordanian Court of Cassation (no such court exists in the West Bank), and (C) files (court records) of femicide cases in the West Bank which some attorneys were willing to share with us.

Although we requested to review the records of the criminal courts to obtain a sample of cases involving femicide, our request was denied. In the absence of such statistics, we were unable to determine the number of femicide cases adjudicated in the West Bank. Our efforts, however, resulted in obtaining the records of eight cases of actual femicide. While five of the cases were tried in the northern districts of the West Bank (Nablus, Tulkarm, and Qalqilia), the remaining three cases were tried in the central region (Ramallah). Although we do not claim that the obtained sample reflects a truly representative sample from a rigid statistical perspective, we feel that our purposive sample of convenience is adequate for the following reasons:

1. It was derived from attorney files representing different geographic regions of the West Bank.
2. The records were subjected to qualitative rather than quantitative analyses. Hence, validity is derived from the “credibility” of the analysis, the patterns that evolve, and the scrutiny with which the data were examined.
3. The data were subjected to individual as well as group analysis.

Findings and Analysis

This section will be divided into four main sub-sections: (1) Discriminatory Nature of Penal Code and Jordanian Court of Cassation, (2) Discriminatory and Negligent Practices by Attorney Generals and Prosecutors, (3) Discriminatory Practices by the Presiding Judge(s), and (4) External Social-Political Pressures on Judicial System.

In general, we were able to accumulate eight cases of actual femicide for reasons associated with family honor as shown in the Table below.

Table 18
Distribution of Obtained Femicide Cases According
to Year, Acquaintance, Age and Method of Femicide

<u>Case No.</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Acquaintance</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Method</u>
1	1993	Brother	22	Stabbing, Decapitation
2	1995	Brother	31	Stabbing
3	1996	Cousins	19	Stabbing
4	1996	Brother	24	Lynching, Beating, Poisoning
5	1996	Sister	16	Suffocating and Poisoning
6	1997	Father	17	Hitting with a Rock
7	1998	Cousins	26	Tying and Shooting (pistol)
8	1998	Unknown	24	Hitting with a Rock

One interesting finding is that the victim's family dropped their personal rights (al-haq al-shakhsi) in all cases. It is not clear if a father compromises his rights for the sake of a son who killed his daughter, or a husband who compromises his right for the sake of a father who killed his daughter? What is clear, however, the victim is the property of her male guardians. The "owner" (father, husband) conveys a clear message to society when he drops his personal rights: The crime is forgiven as if nothing had occurred.

One prosecutor explained the phenomenon in the following excerpt: "The fact that the controlling mentality is a male one means that there is no mercy or feelings for the victim. Women in such cases are in the condition of 'Feeka al-khisamu wa 'anta al-khasmu wa al-hakamu' (My dispute is with you, but you are the adversary and judge). This reality gives women no other choice."

This fatalistic way of perceiving things and actually accepting so-called social norms allows social control agents to believe that there is no way out. We believe that the first step that should be taken is working with the social control agents in opening the doors for hope, and promoting their conviction that we build and change reality.

Discriminatory Nature of Penal Code and Rulings of Cassation Court

The Jordanian Penal Code (Number 16, 1960) is gender biased and discriminatory in nature, especially the article (340: 1, 2) specifically dealing with crimes committed on the basis of what is termed “family honor”. Only males (i.e., husbands and male blood relatives) can be exempted from penalty or benefit from reduced sentences. A wife who kills her spouse after she “catches” him fornicating with another female cannot be considered to have had a “justifiable excuse” when she committed the crime. It is not surprising, therefore, to observe Palestinian males who kill their female relatives to surrender themselves to the police immediately after committing their crime. Although pride (cleansing tarnished family honor) may account for this behavior to some extent, the offending male is aware that the law will be to his advantage. Although males are aware that they may not possess the evidence needed to benefit from the article (340:1, 2) specific to “crimes of honor,” they and their defense attorneys are “confident” they could “manipulate” the evidence to benefit from the general article (98). In essence, femicide is “encouraged” by the existing legal code. Far more ominous, however, is that males who kill their female relatives under “suspicious” circumstances also could receive a reduced sentence according to an interpretation of article (98) by the Jordanian Court of Cassation. For example, the court ruled in one case that reducing the sentence of a brother who killed his sister after hearing a rumor that she had committed fornication was correct (Decision 88/70, p. 962, 1970). The court justified the interpretation because the sister allegedly confirmed the rumor to her brother. The Court of Cassation, however, issued another ruling stating that the accused could not benefit from a reduced sentence if he committed the crime as a result of hearing a rumor.

In one of the cases analyzed, the sentence of a male accused of killing his sister was reduced on the basis of article (98) simply because he “suspected” his sister of having a romantic relationship with another male. The defense attorney argued that article (98) is applicable because:

1. The sister engaging in a romantic relationship outside the realm of marriage constitutes an act which is “unrightful”. Hence, condition one of Article 98 was met.
2. Allowing the sister to engage in a romantic relationship outside the institution of marriage posed an element of “danger” to social values, thus satisfying condition two of Article 98.
3. The brother was enraged by the knowledge that his sister was engaged in a romantic relationship, thus satisfying condition three of Article 98 (the killing was committed while the offender was in a state of rage).

Discriminatory and Negligent Practices of Prosecutors and District Attorneys

Jordanian law pertaining to trial procedures (Article 35, Procedural Law Number 9, 1961) stipulates that the role of a prosecutor is to investigate the crime

(place, time, circumstances, etc.), and question the accused and all witnesses holding information bearing on the crime. Prosecutors then prepare an indictment detailing the crime, its nature, and the date on which it took place. The prosecutor then presents the evidence upon which the indictment was based, and should request the maximum sentence applicable by law. It should be noted here that District Attorneys approve all indictments prior to their presentation to the court.

Analysis of the studied cases revealed that discriminatory practices were evident prior to the case reaching the court. Prosecutors failed (neglected) in many cases to gather or even utilize available evidence that buttresses their indictment. The testimony of persons who could advocate for the deceased (victim) was neither sought nor included in the case presented by the prosecutor. In essence, the voice of the victim was never presented or heard.

In another case, the prosecutor did not charge three brothers of any crime although they signed a pledge to ensure their sister's safety. The crime of femicide was carried out by the fourth brother. There appears to be consensus amongst legal thinkers that the brothers who signed the pledge were not absolved of their responsibility to safeguard their sister's life, although they did not commit the femicide personally.

The above case demonstrates not only was the prosecutor negligent in presenting all the evidence, his sympathies appear to have been with the accused rather than the victim. The claim (evidence) of the accused was given more credence than the scientific report of the forensic physician. No one was called to advocate for the victim. In essence, her voice was muted. The most disturbing feature of this practice is that those entrusted by the state (i.e., prosecutors and district attorneys) to defend the rights of the victim become the victim's enemy. The following court decision exemplifies this thesis:

A 22 year-old married and pregnant (fifth month) female was killed by her brother for suspecting that she had committed an honor offense. He decapitated the victim's head, and subsequently slashed her abdomen and removed the fetus. The presiding judge stated in his sentencing remarks that the prosecutor should have been more thorough in his investigation, especially in light of the fact that the deceived was killed in stages, and two premeditated murders took place (mother and fetus). Despite the viciousness of the crime committed, the prosecutor failed to gather the necessary evidence to support the case.

Discriminatory Practices of the Presiding Judges

Analysis of the femicide cases under examination revealed that none of the perpetrators of femicide was convicted of the crime (e.g. murder and premeditated murder) attributed to him/her by the prosecution. Theoretically, all the accused in the examined cases should have been tried according to Article (340: 1, 2). It should be remembered here that article (340: 1, 2) allows the courts to exempt the offender from penalty or reduce his sentence if he kills a female relative for reasons associated with what is termed as "family honor". Article (340: 1, 2), stipulates, however, that the male relative must either apprehend his female relative in the act of fornication

(coitus), or “surprises” her while being in an “unlawful bed” with another male. None of the examined cases demonstrates that the criteria for invoking article (340: 1, 2) were ever met; i.e., none of the killers either “caught” or “surprised” his female relative during the alleged act of fornication. Hence, none of the offenders could benefit from article (340). The courts, however, were easily persuaded to invoke the general article (98) in order to reduce the sentence of the offender, even when the killing was committed on the premise of a “suspicion” as the following case shows:

The brothers of a married woman heard a rumor that their sister was engaging in adultery and prostitution in Amman, Jordan. They lured her to come to the West Bank and began to interrogate her regarding her alleged behavior. They claimed that she confessed and confirmed the rumors they had heard. Furthermore, they sought the advice of the clergy on how to deal with the matter from a religious perspective. They were advised to isolate and imprison her. Realizing she was under threat of being killed, she sought the help of the police who secured a pledge from three of the brothers not to harm her. The fourth brother (did not sign the pledge) then gave his sister poison (pesticide) to drink, and struck her head on the wall twice. He tried to strangle her with his bare hands, but she did not die. He then brought a metal wire from an adjacent room, wrapped it around her neck, and strangled her until she died. Although the prosecution accused the brother of premeditated murder, the court, reduced the accusation to murder as the result of invoking article (98). It justified its decision on the basis that: (1) the victim did not deny the rumors levied against her; (2) her behavior contradicts social values and norms; and (3) the brother was in a state of rage when he committed the crime. Furthermore, the court also exonerated the three brothers who signed the pledge, although the prosecution accused them of involuntary manslaughter. The court justified its decision on the basis that none of the accused either participated in the killing or was present in the room at that time.

An examination of this case reveals that not only did the court manipulate the evidence to reduce the sentence of the killer, it never attempted to examine the validity of the offender’s claim that his sister confirmed the rumors he heard. It failed, therefore, to safeguard the right of the victim either to defend herself, or have someone advocate her case. Traditionally and legally, the prosecution is entrusted with this function. Our previous discussion on the practices of prosecutors showed, however, that not only prosecutors failed to fulfill this role adequately at times, but led the courts to believe that (Article 98) was applicable to the case they were prosecuting. Given that the conditions for invoking article (340: 1, 2) could not be met, the courts were easily persuaded to invoke the more ambiguous article 98. Furthermore, no rigorous examination (e.g., psychological assessment) was ever made to ascertain if the conditions (e.g., accused acted while in a state of extreme rage) for invoking article (98) were met. The courts also deemed all “sexual” violations committed by females not only as “unrightful”, but also “dangerous” to the stability and integrity of society. In one of the examined cases, a father killed his daughter after learning that she had a romantic relationship with a young man that led to the loss of her virginity. Although the father “lured” his daughter to go with him in the car (to get a second medical opinion regarding the intactness of her hymen), he used the opportunity to thrash his daughter’s head with a rock. Although the State accused the father of murder, the court modified the charge to murder with a justifiable excuse by invoking Article 98.

The manipulation of the law in one of the cases was sufficient to preclude the accused from receiving any penalty. The family of a young 16 year-old female suspected that she was pregnant (enlargement of abdomen and nipples). The victim denied the accusation initially, but confessed to her sister that she was pregnant from her cousin. It was alleged that she told her sister one evening that she wants to take some medication with her tea in the hope of aborting the pregnancy, but she was trying to commit suicide. The accused sister informed her father, brothers, and uncle (who were in the house) that the victim was tired and wished to rest. When she returned, she claimed that she saw her sister snoring and frothing at the mouth. She then put ten bags of detergent weighing 10 kg. in a larger plastic bag and placed it on the victim's face, mouth, and nose. The bag was then secured in place with two pillows and pressed against the face of the victim. She covered her sister and sat in the room for 1-2 hours until she felt that her family wanted to retire to sleep. She then removed the bag from her sister's face, and went to bed with the knowledge that her sister had died. Although an autopsy of the interred body (victim was buried without being examined by a physician) revealed that suffocation was the cause of death, the accused sister was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to an imprisonment of one year. A translation of the court's decision reveals its justification for the reduced sentence.

The accused, in her statement (N-11, p. 11) to the prosecutor, stated that when she heard her sister snorting, she knew it was the result of the sedative she had taken in her body, and that the sister wished to die. The accused closed the door on the deceived, which is indicative to us that the accused did not intend to kill the deceived with her hands, but wished that her deceived sister will die. She placed the bags of detergent on top of the quilt that covered the deceived so that her snorting will not be heard and arouse the attention of those in the house who will then rescue her. The accused believed that her sister will die from the sedative she has taken, although she died as a result of the unintentional act of placing the detergent bags over her mouth in order to muffle her snorting. The testimony in this case led to the conclusion that the accused did not wish to murder her deceived sister when she committed the act that led to her death. Therefore, it cannot be other than an error committed by the accused which led to the death, although she had no intention to kill. Hence, the proper accusation that should be attributed to this deed is involuntary manslaughter.”

The sentence was appealed and reduced to two months of imprisonment on the grounds that the accused is a woman. She was released, however, after posting bail.

It is worth noting here that courts referred to the victim as the “deceived” in all femicide cases. Analyses of the court decisions, however, revealed that the courts did not deal with the victims as victims of deception, but rather as criminals. The disparity between how the courts identified the cases and how they dealt with them is alarming morally and legally.

External Social-Political Pressures on Judicial System

Although the courts were found to invoke Article 98 with little resistance, it was also found that external social and political pressures were exerted on the judicial system. For example, charges of murder were levied against a Bedouin male who killed his female cousin (also fiancée) because she had “ruined his reputation”. The victim allegedly accompanied a man believed to be a drug dealer to another town for

several days. She also was accompanied by her three sisters, and a medical examination revealed that all the females had intact hymen. Two brothers and an uncle were also charged with being accomplices to the murder.

The tribe of the accused called upon President Arafat in a newspaper advertisement to “intervene” in the case: “A.H. is the one who killed his fiance who did not preserve his honor or oath. This young man, sir, is one of the sons of the glorious Intifada, a son of Fateh that never nor will ever abandon any of its men. He has sacrificed three years of his life in the cells and prisons of the Zionist enemy for the sake of the beloved Palestine.” A Presidential decree was relayed to the prosecutor to cease all criminal procedures against one of the brothers accused of being an accomplice to the crime, and to try the killer under the rubric of crimes committed on the basis of defending family honor. It is believed that the President was persuaded to take such action for the following reasons:

1. The accused (killer and brother accomplice) were claimed to have been active members in the Intifada (popular uprising) and supporters of a leading political faction.
2. He did not want to alienate the members of a large tribe.
3. He accepted the tribe’s claim that the brother did not act as an accomplice, but was arrested accidentally because he ran to the scene of the crime after hearing the screams of the victim.

The court ceased all criminal procedures against the brother (accomplice), but proceeded with its trial against the killer. Although the defense requested that Article 98 be invoked, the court refused to accept that the accused acted while in a state of rage and sentenced him to life imprisonment with hard labor. The sentence, however, was reduced to eight years of imprisonment as a result of the tribal reconciliation that took place between the families of the victim and offender on the one hand, and the relinquishing of the victim’s father to his personal right for retribution on the other hand.

This case demonstrates how social pressure was manipulated to achieve political leverage. The outcome of this pressure not only exonerated one of the accomplices and reduced the sentence of the murderer, it justified the crime and “accused the victim of a greater crime. Not preserving the honor and oath of her fiance was tantamount to her betrayal of the beloved Palestine. Hence, the murderer was defending not only his “personal” honor, but also the honor of Palestine. The most ominous ramification of this case, however, is that it had set an extremely dangerous precedent. Politically active males who victimize their female counterparts can be “exempted” from their crimes. Serving a nation under a political banner becomes a license to kill females in order to preserve the honor of those who claim to have struggled.

Section Seven: Analysis of Police Records and Interviews

Prior to presenting the analysis of the interviews with police officers, it is worthy to furnish the reader with official statistical data provided by the Palestinian Police. The data show that a total of 33 cases of actual femicide took place during the period 1996–1998 as shown in Table 19. An examination of the Table reveals that

Table 19

Distribution of Femicide Cases According to Age and Region

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Region</u>		<u>Age</u>	
		<u>West Bank</u>	<u>Gaza</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Range</u>
1996	15	5	10	20.5	13 – 32
1997	10	2	8	28.7	18 - 50
1998	8	3	5	30.6	14 - 50
Total	33	10	23	25.5	13 - 50

Notes:

1. Statistics provided by the Palestinian Police
2. Five cases were documented during the first six months of 1999.

prevalence of femicide decreased nearly by one-half (46.7%) from the base period of 1996. This finding is not congruent with data supplied by unofficial sources. To what extent femicide cases are being embedded in other forms of documented or undocumented deaths remains speculative. What is apparent from the Table, however, is that femicide appears to occur in the Gaza Strip (69.7%) with greater frequency than it occurs (30.3%) in the West Bank. Furthermore, the data depicted in Table 19 shows that females of all age categories (children, adolescents, young and middle-aged adults) are subjected to femicide, although the overwhelming majority being in the young adult group. The police also supplied us with information to show

the relationship of the offender to the victim. Although the information provided is based on a limited number ($N = 39$) of cases, the results are expected and striking. The offenders in all the provided femicide cases are close relatives (e.g., fathers, brothers, husbands, uncles) of the victim. Furthermore, the data also show that the crime was committed by more than one offender in some cases. The family, it appears, has become a torture chamber rather than a safe haven for a large number of females. This belief is supported by the universal literature and data, in addition to our clinical experience and statistical profiles. The in-depth interviews conducted with police officers, however, provided contextual information more rich and informative than the statistical data.

The contextual analysis in this section is based on two major sources of data: The first source of data came from the 30 interviews we conducted with police officers distributed amongst eight districts (Jinin, Tulkarm, Nablus, Qalqilia, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Jericho) within the West Bank. It should be noted here that the Palestinian Police does not have a specialized section to deal with femicide cases. Consequently, the interviewed police officers were those who have dealt with cases of femicide, and each interview lasted approximately two hours in duration. The Center's clinical experience with the police provided the second source for the analyzed contextual data. An in-depth analysis of the gathered data revealed the following major themes:

Conflicting and Contradictory Points of Departure/Frames of Reference

Although the respondents stated that clear police regulations exist, the analysis revealed that police officers perceived, analyzed, and interpreted the studied issue in their unique and personal style. For example, some officers perceived killing of women as a function of their deviant behavior; and consequently, saw their role as benevolent teachers (preachers) urging the "deviant" female to return to the "honored" traditional role within the domestic and private sphere. This sentiment was resounded in the following excerpt:

"We are an Arab Muslim society that believes in everything God taught us in His divine books (Qura'an, Bible, Torah)...We continue to preserve our unique Middle Eastern traditions and culture. For us, honor is one of the most important elements in our society. Women are considered 'qassir' (someone in need of a custodian). They should never cross the line of honor."

Other police officers felt that the problem is not female deviance, but rather the invasion of unauthentic Western (including Israeli corruptive methods) behaviors within Palestinian society that created confusion within the cultural, social, and political codes. This group stated that such crimes should be dealt with in two different fashions. While re-educating females to "our authentic norms and traditions" represents the first method, the need to search for new and appropriate interventions that take into consideration the new trends and transitions in society reflects the second approach. They proposed the empowerment of women, raising their awareness level, making them better able to defend and safeguard their rights and needs as a method to prevent the occurrence of such crimes. Some respondents

felt that the problem lies in the emancipation of women, being employed outside their homes, mixing with males, and their level (overly) of education.

The analysis also revealed that some officers tend to espouse all or a combination of the above mentioned explanations. In some cases, novel explanations were presented. For example, some attributed their positions to the ever-changing regulations from higher policy sources. Others, however, felt that the social status of the offender and victim bears on how the case is treated. An offender coming from a socially or politically influential family will be treated differently if his status was to the contrary, especially if the victim comes from a poor and not influential family.

This variance in perception, vision, and approach to dealing with such problems led police officers to use variant rather than standardized methods of handling such crimes, which will be discussed subsequently. It should be mentioned here, however, that the elements of “sutra” and “dabdabeh” were the prevailing forces influencing and directing the approaches adopted by the police officers.

A Critical Perspective of How Femicide is Dealt With

Almost one third of the respondents were very critical of the prevalent tribal policy used to address such crimes. They provided examples to show that the decision to take the life of a female is taken only after the approval of the tribal head is obtained. “We are in a new society,” one police officer stated. “Tribal codes and norms are obsolete. The public, however, generally addresses the tribal system in issues of social disputes and crimes committed against women. This is a clear catastrophe, especially if we wish to gain our independence and build our state. If the tribal notables continue to address crimes committed against women, why do we need a police force? When you basically look at these crimes, it is the criminals (tribal heads) who gave their blessing to commit the crime.” This sentiment is reflected in the statement of another officer: “It is extremely dangerous to see that tribal notables are building their power these days on women issues.”

In general, police officers negatively perceive the role of the tribal system, and foresee a need to change the public’s opinion in being more understanding of the uniqueness of such cases. They also expressed that killing is never a solution as one officer stated:

“Killing a woman - your sister, mother, or relative devaluates us as men... devaluates our society. We need to make people aware that killing is and never was a solution. There is a need for women organizations to move and work vigorously in order to change the existing situation.” Other police officers voiced reservations regarding this opinion. They feel that women organizations cannot achieve this goal unilaterally; they will be attacked viciously. The issue should be raised by human rights and non-feminist organizations. Others suggested that changes in existing legislation could have a major impact on the issue as shown in the following excerpt: “The value (price) of women is very cheap within the legal codes”. Others, however, believed that legal changes are not the sole answer; there is a need for serious investment in working with lay men and women in order to change the existing situation.”

Although the critical manner of thinking apparent from the statements of some police officers opens new venues for discussion, the respondents repeatedly qualified their views with the harsh reality they live. They felt that no opportunity is provided to them to apply their views. Although they do not condone the utilization of traditional-tribal methods, they felt obliged at times to utilize them for the sake of the woman. In some interviews, police officers expressed very creative methods to protect women from further abuse or death. For example, a police officer convinced the hospital staff to hospitalize (rather than incarcerate) a young woman who was under the threat of being killed. The hospitalization gave him time to map the existing resources and search for a more proper method to protect the victim. It should be mentioned here that the absence of a safe shelter forced many police officers to return abused women to their homes where some ended up being killed.

The police also proposed that police files should not be closed even if the woman drops charges. Furthermore, they expressed a need for having clear policies to guide their action, in addition to sources of support for themselves and the abused women.

Difficulties Facing Police Personnel

The in-depth interviews revealed a host of difficulties experienced by the police in their attempt to deal with abuses against women, and to avert their killing as summarized in the following:

The Police are not Considered a Viable Address by the Public

Police officers expressed anger and frustration regarding their existing status quo. Some stated that only 20% of abuse cases against women reach the police due to three major reasons:

1. There is a prevailing belief amongst the police that little, if anything, could be done to dissuade or deter people from killing females due to reasons associated with “family honor”. The police are placed in a quandary in such cases because of the lack of supportive resources available to them. Respondents mentioned cases and incidents in which individuals came to the police after they killed or buried their daughter. In some cases, they heard of girls being viciously abused and imprisoned in their homes, but the police was never informed. One girl was killed and buried by her family on the same day, leaving few options for the police to investigate the matter. The police believed that a call for an investigation of the death could lead to public disturbances, or create a serious conflict with the victim’s family and Mukhtar. When the police managed to apprehend the offender (a father who killed his 18 year-old daughter), they received an order for his release 11 days later. Despite the rumors and gossips surrounding the crime, the village remained muted about it. Such a collective social reaction precluded the police from further investigating the crime.

2. The second reason mentioned revolved around legal codes and procedures. Police officers felt that the lack of support provided to them by the law precluded them from being an address to the public as shown in the following case recounted by one officer:

A young girl ran away from home because her family wished to impose on her

the marriage of her cousin. She was brought to the police station by a taxi driver while in a confused and frightened state. When she was able to speak and identify herself, the police were obliged to contact the family to investigate the matter. Given that no shelters are available for females in distress, the police requested a community notable to house her for the night until her family arrives. The police and community notable worked with the family, and requested they sign a pledge assuring her safety and well-being before releasing her in their custody. The police officer handling the case stated: “The law does not allow me to file a complaint on behalf of the girl. Legally, only her ‘wali’ (guardian, custodian) could file a complaint on her behalf. The guardian, in this case, is the abuser. How am I able to help her when the father and the family are the main enemy?” In another interview, a police officer stated:

“I did all I can. I had a serious talk with the husband and father of a married 15 year-old girl who ran away for three days from her husband’s house. The family and the husband signed a pledge to assure her safety, but they finally killed her”.

3. The police expressed confusion regarding the role they should play in light of the existing available resources, alternatives, and circumstances surrounding such crimes. They do not know if regulations and formal police policy regarding such issues exist. Furthermore, they felt that, in some cases, they are unable to do anything. For example, the victim confessed to committing an honor crime, and the police felt they are unable to protect her as stated by a police officer: “We conducted our investigation and learned she had actually committed an honor crime. Once the brother learned of the crime, he killed and buried his sister in a cave.” The police described similar cases as “nothing to do” cases. One stated: “Women come to the station to complain that they are being threatened, but are unable to present evidence to that effect. We cannot imprison an individual for ‘intending’ to kill someone. The law does not punish people for their intentions.”

Credibility of Information Provided to Police

Police officers stated that there was a very serious problem with the credibility of information provided to the police. For example, the information provided for cases of suicide was almost entirely based on well-articulated fabrications. Many of the “suicide” cases that reached the police showed evidence that the female was poisoned, burned, or drowned. The family, however, presents them with official forensic certificates stating that the victim had committed suicide. The police offered the following three main sources for the fabrications:

1. **Nuclear Family.** The police provided a case in which a 23 year-old unmarried woman was burned to death. Her family stated that it was an accidental burn from the stove. Her younger sister, however, began to scream at her funeral “Kataluha...Kataluha” (They killed her; they killed her). The sister’s screams were muted because she was unable to prove her allegations. The family explained the sister’s behavior to the police as “delusions” resulting from the deep loss of her beloved sister.

2. **Formal Social Control Agents.** The police claimed that personnel working in hospitals, psychiatry, the clergy, forensic medicine, and welfare departments – in

addition to tribal notables and community leaders - have practiced the fabrication of information to nullify abuses and crimes. This trend, police officers claim, extends to prosecutors and judges who do not punish offenders according to the evidence presented to them by the police.

For example, one officer claimed that the prosecutor had sufficient evidence to arrest a threatening uncle, but chose not to do so. Three days later the uncle killed his niece and offered her decapitated head to the police. Another police officer accused a religious leader of lying to the police in order to allow the family of a 13-year-old girl to impose on her marriage to an old, mentally retarded man. The cleric was aware that the girl had been raped by a family member, but did not share this information with the police. The female was subsequently abused viciously by her elderly and retarded spouse, prompting her to run away and become a prostitute. The police officers stated: "If she is killed today by her brother - which is very possible - people would justify the act, claiming she was a prostitute...No one would admit that she was a victim of incest and that her victimization never ended".

3. Combined Sources. Often, the police reported, the family colluded with official social control agents to fabricate the evidence. The following reported case serves as an excellent example:

A married woman sought the help of the police because her husband abused her physically and sexually. The entire family came to the police station to return the woman to her home, but she adamantly refused, claiming they did not help her when she addressed them previously. The father and husband, in collusion with a medical official, managed to present the police with an official medical report stating that the woman was mentally ill and needs to be committed to a mental hospital. The police officer stated that the victim fell on her knees to kiss his feet, to beseech his help. He was pained to relinquish her to the custody of her abusers, but had no other alternative.

All in the Name of Sutra and Dabdabeh

Sutra and dabdabeh were identified by police officers, as well as tribal heads and Mukhtars, as the guiding principles to deal with female abuses. The interviewed police officers stated that there is an apparent trend in society to cover up the crime expeditiously to reduce the subsequent damage that may be incurred on the family and community. The need to cover up was mentioned by a respondent who explained that a father killed his daughter and reported to the police two hours later that she was missing. One police officer stated: "They do what they feel they need to do to protect their honor, but then they cover it up with stories such as she fell, was burned, or wanted to commit suicide. We suspect that it was murder rather than suicide, but we also do not want to add pain to the family...Sutra is the best way...The woman is dead...Why cause more pain?"

The prevailing social and cultural methods were reflected also in the manner in which the police justified and explained the reasons behind the abuse. The patriarchal, masculine approach of analysis was reflected in the elements of sutra and dabdabeh. Furthermore, the offender's mental health status becomes a point of

consideration as shown in the statement of one police officer: “The killer goes through a harsh psychological situation. Judges also tend to consider the psychological state of mind of the offender when his honor was violated.” Some police officers went as far as claiming that killing on the basis of “family honor” is part of human nature. “Human and social nature dictate that men either kill their ‘violating’ female relatives or leave the country. No man can live or face his people when his honor is tarnished. The natural human reaction is to kill the source of dishonor.”

Hardships Resulting From Confusion of Role

Given that the Palestinian police force is relatively nascent, additional hardships and responsibilities are imposed on its membership. For example, police officers felt their ability and responsibility to protect society from crime is compounded by the fact they are the first national police for the emerging Palestinian state. They view their role as social change agents, activists, and leaders who define and clarify legal values that should be respected by society.

Variance, however, was observed amongst the responses of police officers in defining their role. Those who believed that their role encompasses social activism and leadership felt an intense need to convey this feeling to society as shown in the following statement: “People need to know that police officers have a very important role in protecting their security and safety. It is over with the previous political mess, and it is time to prepare and organize our selves as an independent state.” These held beliefs gave some officers the impression they are omnipotent, possessing the ability to institute wide-range social changes if society cooperates with them. Police officers who espoused such views, and possessed a high need to clarify and define their role, were more reluctant to cooperate with other existing formal and non-formal agencies.

Other police officers, however, felt that their nascent status and prevailing cultural beliefs incapacitate their efforts to intervene and act in cases involving the abuse of women. Abuses inflicted upon women are “honor issues, and it is not the role of the police to intervene in private family matters,” as stated by one officer. Another respondent reiterated this opinion: “Issues related to women are usually very complicated, and it is difficult for us as police officers to start dealing and wheeling with fathers and brothers. It is difficult because we are basically men, and it is not acceptable that male police personnel interfere in the family affairs of another man.”

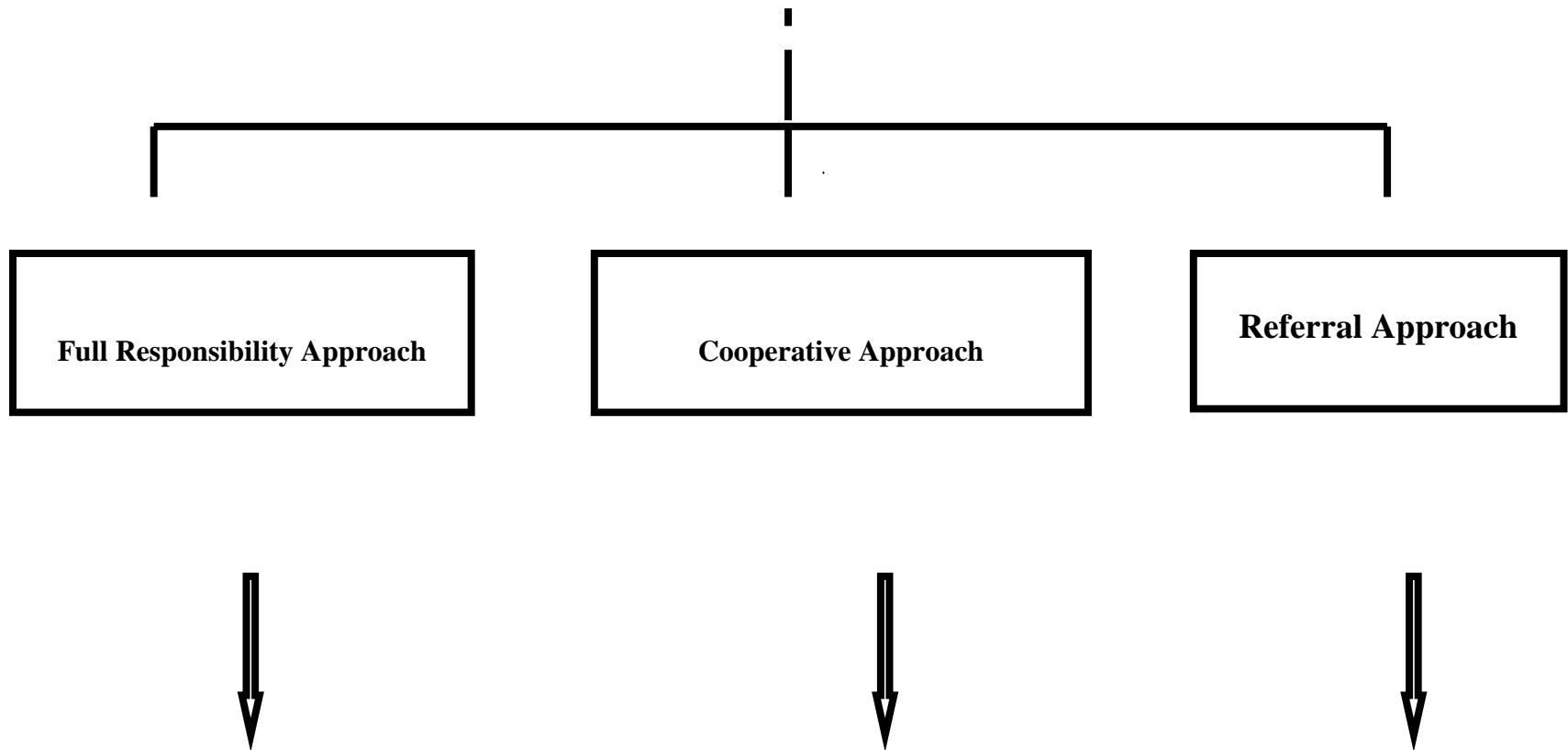
Hence, masculine and patriarchal power intricacies reflected and contributed to the existing confusion within the perception and willingness of police officers to react/not-react to crimes perpetrated against women.

The existing confusion regarding the role of the police prompted officers to utilize numerous and variant methods of reacting to abuses or crimes against women, especially in cases of sexual abuse. One stunning finding we uncovered was that all interviewed police officers held the belief that virginity tests should be performed in all cases of actual or suspected sexual abuse. They claimed that the police should determine if the female is pregnant, a virgin, or has engaged in sexual intercourse. The medical examination is standard procedure approved and regulated by the

attorney general. When one interviewee was queried about the importance and relevance of the medical examination, he responded: “It could tell us if the woman is guilty or not. If the examination reveals that her virginity has not been compromised, she is not to be blamed. The situation is complicated, however, if the examination revealed she had lost her virginity, and the threat on her life increases.” On the other hand, they also stated that it is better for the police to invoke a policy of conscious neglect and denial to the occurrence of such abuses. Irrespective of the belief espoused, the imposition of virginity tests is, within itself, a source of worry. Although rape kits are utilized in Western countries, the examination is invoked with the best interest of the victim in mind. The imposed virginity tests in Palestine, however, are questionable in terms of whose interest they serve – the victim, police, family, or community. Are they invoked in order to avert social instability and sedition, or as a result of a deep sense of responsibility amongst the police? This confusion and contradiction is worthy of further examination.

In an attempt to clarify the reaction of the police to levels I – IV of femicide, the paradigm depicted in the figure below was formulated. An examination of the paradigm reveals that the reaction of the police to female abuse is characterized by three major approaches: (a) referral, (b) full responsibility, and (c) cooperative.

**Model of Police Reaction to
Crimes of Femicide**



Protective Incarceration of Women
Placement in Closed Institutions
Accusation of Vagrancy or Public Disturbance
and Referral to Judicial System

Organizations, Agencies
and Individuals in
Referral Model
Any Organization or
Agency that Could
Protect Victim From
Being Killed

Women Organizations
Tribal System
Extended Family
Governors
Medical Institutions

1. Referral Approach. Police officers espousing this approach perceive abuses against females and crimes of “honor” as not the sole realm of the police. The role of the police, according to this approach, is limited to hearing the complaint of the female, and searching for the proper agency, institution, organization, or individual to whom the female should be referred. Proponents of this approach justified their behavior on the grounds that they are unable to intervene in family and private matters when other important issues consume their time and effort. Furthermore, they felt that to intercede on behalf of the abused female could lead to deleterious (revictimization or retraumatization of victim) consequences. Hence, referral of the case to others (e.g., women organizations, tribal notables, medical institutions, Governors, other security apparatuses) who are more willing and capable of dealing with the case presents a better alternative. We see that proponents of this approach opt to refer the case due to its intricacy and complication, or as a result of their sense of responsibility.

2. Sole Responsibility Approach. Proponents of this approach believed that issues such as abuses against women, or women “deviant behaviors,” should be dealt with solely by the police. They are of the opinion that they represent the first address of femicide cases. Incarcerating (protective custody) and institutionalizing women when deemed necessary were two methods utilized by proponents of this approach. They also committed parents to sign pledges guaranteeing the safety and well-being of their daughters. Police officers, according to this approach, dealt with each case of female abuse in a serious manner, irrespective of whether the method is traditionally or legally oriented such as arresting the offender and following a strictly legal process. They worked on collecting the relevant evidence (according to personal perspective) prosecutors needed to present in the court. Police officers espousing such an approach based their position on their respect of the law, and their commitment to protect the individual (women) and the collective (society) from harm and crime. It could be argued here that this approach defends existing discriminating laws, but it also could be argued that it defends the victim. The approach suffers, however, from its polarized perspective on how to deal with femicide cases. The unwillingness of the proponents of this approach to cooperate with others could jeopardize the victim and/or collective. Victims live within contexts that should be taken into consideration in any intervention strategy.

3. Cooperative Approach. This approach is characterized by a belief in cooperating with as many parties as possible when a case of femicide is encountered. Police officers following this approach tend to cooperate with all the organizations, agencies, and individuals identified in the referral approach. Although this approach appears to be professional and progressive in nature, it could be questioned in terms of who is the beneficiary of such cooperation. For example, police officers were found to cooperate with organizations (e.g., service-oriented organizations) to the benefit of the victim. The officer who received the cooperation of a local hospital to place a female threatened with femicide serves as an excellent positive example of this approach. Cooperation, however, could be to the benefit of others (i.e., not victim). For example, cooperating with tribal notables to return an abused female to her abusers, or imposing forced marriage upon her abuser, serve the interests of the family, abuser, and collective, but not the victim. Proponents who utilize this form

(negative) of cooperation justify their action on the grounds it averts social instability, bloodshed, and social sedition (fitneh). It should be noted here that police officers who follow this approach do not perceive their action as detrimental to the victim; they believe they acted in her best interest. The officer who cooperated with the extended family to return a run-away (to avert being married) adolescent girl to her family believed he helped her to avoid being killed. He stated: “We returned her to her family ‘saalmeh, ghaanmeh’ (safe and prosperous)”.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The significance of this project did not lie only in its consideration as the first systematic investigation of this phenomenon in the region, but also in the abundance and richness of the information, data, and experiences that were collected and accumulated. No project, as far as we have been able to ascertain, has researched femicide from such a broad spectrum, angle, and perspective, not only conceptually, but also methodologically. Furthermore, this project, in our opinion, has generated awareness beyond our expectations amongst formal and informal social control agents regarding the plight of Palestinian females who are threatened with death. This statement, however, should not be construed in any sense that Palestinian societal attitudes towards the killing of females have been significantly or dramatically altered by this project. These general conclusions are augmented, however, by several specific ones which will be elucidated upon and tied to respective recommendations.

This project was the first endeavor to broaden the definition of femicide from a single rubric (actual killing) to a broad nomenclature encompassing four levels (perceived threat, verbal and non-verbal threats, attempted femicide, and actual femicide). The data and results yielded by this project attest to the soundness of this step. For example, perceived femicide was shown to be as deleterious and detrimental to the physical, mental, and social health and safety of the threatened female as attempted femicide. This conclusion is collaborated by recent thinking in psychology: How we process fears and threats cognitively is far more important than the “objective” threats to which we are subjected. Hence, professionals who work and deal with cases of abused females should give the perceived cognitive frame of the victim the attention and credence it deserves. Furthermore, social sensitivities to abuses against the sexuality and entity of women should be of prime concern to those who work with such victims. The results were cogently clear: Palestinian females not only internalized the social mores and expectations of males, they also behaved accordingly. Hence, it was not unexpected to have detected self-blame amongst almost all of the cases treated, irrespective of the “objective” reasons to contradict that.

Despite the concerted efforts expended by the staff of this project to determine accurately the scope of this phenomenon in Palestinian society, we were unable to determine its true scope for several reasons. We were faced with innumerable difficulties and challenges to obtain accurate and well-documented official records. The statistics we were able to compile from various official agencies was often incomplete and contradictory. Most ominously, however, was the repeated finding from unofficial sources (e.g., tribal notables) that the scope of this phenomenon is much greater than what the official records indicate. According to these “unofficial” sources, scores of females are killed each year for reasons associated with what is termed “family honor” without the knowledge of the public. Furthermore, many deaths attributed to “accidents” may have been actual femicides. There is reason to suspect that some records have been altered to falsify the true reason of death. The study and combat of femicide cannot be tackled effectively without the presence of accurate and reliable data on the subject-matter. It is of great urgency, therefore, that an official data bank be established to document such cases accurately and thoroughly. This step, in order to be effective, should be augmented by the establishment of an official body entrusted with investigating and documenting all

cases of suspected and actual femicide.

Our experience has affirmed to us that treating femicide cases requires a multidisciplinary, professional, and social effort. No single profession or center is capable of dealing with femicide cases and threats solely. It took the concerted and coordinated efforts of the medical, legal, social, and mental health professionals within and outside of the Center to combat the threats of femicide to which the clients were subjected. Often, the staff relied on public officials such as the police and even the Governor's Office to ensure that a client's safety is guarded. Other times, the staff utilized the services of the clergy and tribal notables to achieve this goal. Each case posed a unique challenge that required a unique strategy. Our experience has shown us that working with femicide cases is fraught with obstacles and unexpected events. It is analogous to a situation in which one is in a state of perpetual crisis. Hence, workers dealing with femicide cases should be non-conventional, innovative, creative, energetic, and flexible. Furthermore, our experience has shown us that strategies developed in advanced societies to combat femicide not only may be ineffective, but, more ominously, could jeopardize the safety and life of the victim. Hence, workers should not use a "cookbook" approach to dealing with femicide cases in societies such as the Palestinian one. It is important that a cadre of workers be trained in these culture-sensitive and innovative approaches in order to combat femicide. This training should also be supplemented by providing training to police officials, prosecutors, judges, and other public officials who may come into contact with potential or actual femicide cases in order to raise their awareness to this issue on the one hand, and develop and improve their humane and professional skills in dealing with such cases on the other hand.

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List of Tables

	Page
1. Demographic Characteristics of Clients.....	14
2. Frequency and Percentage of Abuses Encountered.....	16
3. Seeking Help From Others According to Frequency and Party.....	18
4. Obstacles Encountered During Intervention.....	21
5. Non-Conventional Strategies Utilized.....	22
6. Distribution of Femicide Cases According to Level by District, Residence, Marital Status, and Socio-Economic Status.....	24
7a. Distribution of Events Leading to Threats of Femicide According to Femicide Level.....	27
7b. Perceived Reasons of Being Threatened According to District, Domicile, Marital Status, and Socio-Economic Status.....	28
8. Femicide Cases Distributed According to Intervention Strategy.....	30
9. Distribution of Femicide Cases According to Degree (Percentage) of Seeking Police Help.....	30
10. Frequency of Abuses Encountered According to Femicide Level.....	31
11. Distribution of Cases Seeking Police Help According to District and Place of Residence.....	32
12. Distribution of Frequency of Addressing the Police According to Marital Status and S.E.S.....	33
13. Frequencies and (Percentages) of Seeking the Aid of the Police According to Perceived Threat of Femicide.....	34
14. Distribution of Reported Suspicious Deaths(1996 -1998)	

According to Gender.....	66
15. Distribution of Reported Female Deaths Attributed to (Fate)	
According to District for the Period 1996 –1998.....	67
16. Distribution of Reported Female Deaths Attributed to (Fate)	
According to Documented Causes.....	68
17. Distribution of Suicide Cases According to District and	
Gender for the Period 1996 – 1998.....	69
18. Distribution of Obtained Femicide Cases According to Year,	
Acquaintance, Age and Method of Femicide.....	74
19. Distribution of Femicide Cases According to Region and Age (Official	
Police Records).....	84

Project Staff

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Dr. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian Project and Research Director	Hebrew University, Institute of Criminology/School of Social Work
Prof. Ahmad Baker Project Consultant	Birzeit University, Department of Psychology
Ms. Suad Abu Dayyeh Research Assistant	Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling
Mr. Mahmoud Ziadeh Research Assistant	Adallah Human Rights, Ramallah
Ms. Shireen Al-Shihabi Legal Research Assistant	Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling
Mr. Musa Najib Research Assistant	Palestinian Center for Counseling