Suhad Daher-Nashif* & Areen Hawari**

The Lived Experiences of Married Palestinian Women from the Occupied Territories of 1967 Residing within the "Green Line"***

التجربة المعيشية للنساء الفلسطينيات من المناطق المحتلة عام 1967 المتزوجات والمقيمات داخل "الخط الأخضر"

Abstract: Few studies have delved into the holistic lived experiences of Palestinian women, particularly those from the West Bank and Gaza Strip who are married and live inside Israel without documentation or permanent residency. This study employs intersectionality as a conceptual framework and explores how these women are deprived of civil rights and access to necessities of life. Furthermore, it uncovers how these women continuously experience daily life under a colonial regime that imposes a conditional citizenship restricted to Palestinians with Israeli passports, and within a patriarchal social context. The study sheds light on the experience of 10 women living in the centrally located Triangle [*al-Muthallath*] region and concludes that these women, most of whom are first and only wives, find emotional and financial support in their spouses and families. Yet they also face political hardships that prevent them from accessing basic rights (e.g., healthcare and education) and social difficulties that intensify the psychological implications, as well as their precarity and sense of cultural alienation, which leads them to develop multiple coping strategies.

Keywords: Palestinian Women; Triangle Region; Precarity; Intersectionality; Cultural Alienation.

الملخص: قليلة هي الدراسات التي خاضت في شمولية الحياة اليومية التي تعيشها النساء الفلسطينيات، خاصة حاملات الهُوية الفلسطينية من الضفة الغربية وقطاع غزة اللاتي تزوجن ويعشن داخل حدود إسرائيل من دون هوية أو وثائق إقامة دائمة. تأتي هذه الدراسة، والتي تستخدم التقاطعية بوصفه إطارًا مفاهيميًا، لتسليط الضوء على تجربة عيش أولئك النساء داخل الخط الأخضر وهنّ منزوعات من أي حق مدني، في ظل نظام استعماري يفرض مواطنة مشروطة ومحدودة أصلًا على الفلسطينيين والفلسطينيات من حاملي الهُوية/ الجنسية الإسرائيلية، وفي ظل منظومة مجتمعية من بين سماتها الذكورية. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على تجربة عشر نساء يعشن في منطقة المثلث وتستنتج أن النساء، في حالة كون الزوجة غالبًا زوجةً وحيدة وزوجةً أولى، يجدن دعمًا معنويًا وماديًا من الأزواج، ومن عائلاتهم، ولكنهنّ يواجهن في الوقت ذاته صعوبات سياسية تحرمهن حقوقًا أساسية في الصحة والتعليم، وأخرى مجتمعية تكرّس شعورهن بعدم الاستقرار والاغتراب الثقافي، فيطوّرن في مقابل ذلك استراتيجيات مواجهة متعددة.

كلمات مفتاحية: النساء الفلسطينيات؛ منطقة المثلث؛ عدم الاستقرار؛ التقاطعية؛ الاغتراب الثقافي.

* Assistant Professor of Sociology of Health, School of Medicine, Keele University, Keele, UK (Corresponding Author).
Email: suhadh@hotmail.com

** Director of the Gender Studies Program, Mada al-Carmel: Arab Center for Applied Social Research, Haifa.
Email: areenhawari@mada-research.org

*** This study was originally published in Arabic, Suhad Daher-Nashif & Areen Hawari, "al-Tajriba al-Maʿīshiyya lil-Nisāʾ al-Filasṭīniyyāt min al-Manāṭiq al-Muḥtalla ʿĀm 1967 al-Mutazawwijāt wa-l-Muqīmāt Dākhil 'al-Khaṭ al-Akhḍar," *Omran*, vol. 11, no. 43 (Winter 2023), pp. 77-103. *Omran* is a quarterly peer-reviewed journal dedicated to social sciences and humanities.

Introduction

Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to a nationality" in a given country, and that "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality".[1] Several United Nations charters discuss the rights of non-citizens such as stateless people, refugees, asylum seekers, foreign workers and their families, human trafficking victims, and non-citizen children, affirming these groups' claim to basic rights such as protection, safety, and transportation, especially in relation to women and children. Among the many international treaties that provide for these rights are the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954) and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961).[2]

However, numerous studies and reports have established that the intersection of legal realities with gender constructions makes stateless women more vulnerable than their male counterparts. For instance, "Bedoon"[3] women in Kuwait face deeper and more complex challenges than Bedoon men, despite the significant hardships that beset the community as a whole. Mohamed al-Badry al-Enezi notes that Bedoon are denied the citizenship of a country that is supposed to be their own. They are treated as illegal inhabitants and suffer widespread abuse. Al-Enezi also notes that Bedoon families are forced, for instance, to pay for their children to private schools, as they are barred from enrolling in the public education system. Kuwaiti author and human rights activist, Dhuha Salem, critiques the Kuwaiti feminist movement's neglect of Bedoon women, especially as some young women have been deprived of an education because their families chose to pay for boys' schooling instead.[4] Salem adds that gender-based discrimination is rampant in the workplace, where women may earn as little as USD 100 to 200 per month and employers exploiting their need for income. Therefore, in the absence of better work opportunities, some women are forced to turn a blind eye to sexual harassment for fear of losing the jobs they so desperately need.

The direct correlation between gender-based violence and civil or political status is a worldwide phenomenon, especially for undocumented or stateless groups. For instance, Priddy et al. explore political and gendered structural violence against more than a million Rohingya denied citizenship in Myanmar, who in 2017 were forced to flee to the Bangladeshi border to seek asylum. Due to regional geopolitics, the displaced Rohingya were not granted refugee status but were instead viewed as "forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals" and, consequently, denied the minimum rights that refugees are entitled to.[5] The authors report that the Tatmadaw (the armed forces of Myanmar) used sexual violence especially against women awaiting deportation, who were subject to physical and verbal gender-based violence at refugee camps. These abuses ranged from forced marriage to discrimination and violence based on race or political status, such as being trafficked and raped by locals in Bangladesh.[6]

Another example appears in Veikou's discussion on the effects of non-citizen status on migrant women and children in Greece who do not have official documentation, or who have overstayed their entry visas. Some were even born in Greece to undocumented parents, making them "stateless"

1 For more details on these provisions, see: United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://did.li/FZZfT

2 On these agreements, see: United Nations, *Human Rights Instruments: Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://bit.ly/3XVtC2x; United Nations, *Human Rights Instruments: Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*, accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://bit.ly/3XUn4RV

3 From the Arabic for "without nationality" [*bidūn jinsiyya*], the term refers to stateless residents, particularly of Kuwait.

4 Dhuha Salem, "al-Mansiyyāt min al-Niswiyya: Ma alladhī Tuwājihuhu al-Nisāʾ al-Bidūn?," *Manshoor*, 30/7/2020, accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://did.li/exxCN

5 Grace Priddy et al., "Gender-Based Violence in a Complex Humanitarian Context: Unpacking the Human Sufferings Among Stateless Rohingya Women," *Ethnicities*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2022), pp. 215 - 232.

6 Ibid.

women who lack the most basic socioeconomic rights.[7] As an example of this injustice, Veikou cites the case of a Syrian refugee who gave birth to her daughter in Greece. The child was not eligible for citizenship according to the Greek law, nor was she considered a citizen under the Syrian law because Syrian mothers cannot grant citizenship to their children. Some of these women have lost their original passports; therefore, without any official documents, they are denied rights and, in some cases, unable to apply for political asylum. Veikou adds that these women and their children are deprived of the basic rights to protection, family life, education, and health that international law affords them.

Many scholars have addressed statelessness as a common condition shared by Palestinians across the world. For instance, Molavi analyses the legal status of the Palestinians who are citizens and residents of the Israeli state, as "an incomplete or partial citizenship" beset with "inherent contradictions and paradoxes" as a result of "Israel's legal, political, and social self-definition as a state for the Jewish people" and the fact that only Jews are allowed to immigrate. In this way, Palestinians are "placed in a paradoxical situation where, as Arab citizens of a Jewish state, they are both *inside* and *outside*, *host* and *guest*, *citizen* and *stateless*".[8] Jefferis examines "the methods by which Israel institutionalizes statelessness among Palestinians from East Jerusalem[9] through national citizenship and entry laws".[10] That statelessness affects Palestinian refugees in other Arab countries such as Lebanon should come as no surprise. Most Arab states have not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 Protocol, the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, nor the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Several regional treaties on refugeehood have been drawn up in the Arab world, but they have largely been violated – leaving millions of Palestinians stateless.[11]

Moreover, Shiblak argues that even Palestinians with Palestinian passports experience a kind of statelessness, because this passport does not connote citizenship; it is merely "considered as a travel document pending formation of a fully-fledged Palestinian state".[12] Hence, Palestinian women who marry and move within the borders of Israel (inside the "Green Line") are shifting from a stateless context into another one where obtaining even partial citizenship is highly unlikely, if not impossible, given Israel's colonial domestic policy. It can then be argued that these variegated, evolving bureaucracies are part of what Berda terms "security theology", which Israel uses as a pretext on which to impose a bureaucratic system that enables its control over Palestinians' lives in many ways.[13] Here, Bishara underscores the importance of not limiting demands for the Palestinian people's rights solely to a discussion of statehood or a citizenship solution,[14] as this disregards past and present injustices, erase them from consciousness, and downplay all the prejudicial colonial practices implemented against Palestinians. On that basis, this study's discussion is not restricted to residency and citizenship among married Palestinian women within Israel but also holistically addresses the colonial mechanisms and apparatuses that deny residency rights.

---

7 Mariangela Veikou, "Back to Basics: Stateless Women and Children in Greece," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 19, no. 5 (2017), pp. 557 - 570.

8 Shourideh C. Molavi, *Stateless Citizenship: The Palestinian-Arab Citizens of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 3, 6.

9 East Jerusalemites can seek residency but not citizenship.

10 Danielle C. Jefferis, "Institutionalizing Statelessness: The Revocation of Residency Rights of Palestinians in East Jerusalem," *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2012), pp. 202 - 230.

11 Susan M. Akram, "The Search for Protection for Stateless Refugees in the Middle East: Palestinians and Kurds in Lebanon and Jordan," *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2018), pp. 407 - 443.

12 Abbas Shiblak, "Stateless Palestinians," *Forced Migration Review*, no. 26 (2006), pp. 8 - 9.

13 Yael Berda, *The Bureaucracy of the Occupation: An Introduction to the Permit Regime* (unpublished manuscript, 2012).

14 Azmi Bishara, "The Pitfalls of a US-Israeli Vision of a Palestine State," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2006), pp. 56 - 63.

Palestinian Women and Israeli Citizenship Law

Several studies have addressed the case of Palestinian women living within the Green Line without documentation or residency. Although these women are not migrants or asylum seekers but rather indigenous inhabitants of their home country (before and after their move across the Green Line), they are deprived of any civil rights under Israeli law. In a previous study on the experience of married West Bank and Gazan women who live in the Negev region within the Green Line, Daher-Nashif notes that they mostly live in secret and lack stay permits, residency, or identity cards, which strips them of their right to medical treatment, education, security, and so on.[15] Daher-Nashif reports that most of these women arrive as second, third, or even fourth wives in a patriarchal society where, alongside the settler-colonial violence that the Israeli authorities carry out against Bedouin citizens of the Negev, polygamy and domestic violence are commonplace. In addition to the communal violence these women suffer, the surrounding society is aware of their vulnerability and weakness within the political system and therefore takes advantage of that by physically and verbally abusing them. As "illegalised" residents, they are powerless to seek protection through any official body. Hence, these women inhabit a space defined by poverty and political, gendered, and social violence, yet are forced to keep quiet and endure the abuses lest they risk deportation to the West Bank or Gaza and separation from their children.

Preser's study on Palestinian "women without status"[16] living in Haifa and northern Palestine discusses three groups of women: Eritrean asylum seekers in Israel; Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza, with or without temporary residence permits; and Eastern European women who were either victims of sex trafficking, or who married Israeli citizens then lost their legal status due to divorce or abuse. Preser interprets the status of Palestinian and other women by viewing Israel as an ethnocracy whose citizenship laws discriminate between Jews and non-Jews, stressing that this lack of legal status perpetuates violence against women. Citing a report from a forum of associations that manage women's shelters, she notes that 12 per cent of sheltered women have no legal status.

In addition to the scholarship on this issue, some art works such as *200 Meters* (2020) directed by Ameen Nayfeh and *Between Heaven and Earth* (2019) directed by Najwa Najjar exemplify the daily injustices that beset Palestinian couples on both sides of the Green Line. Both films narrate the stories of women living inside Israel who are married to men from the West Bank. While the couple in the first film has three children who endure their share of suffering, there are no children in the second film; instead, bureaucracy and an unfolding divorce send the two on a journey to uncover the truth about the husband's parents.[17] The Aljazeera documentary film *The Bride's Dress* (2020) depicts a love story between Nazareth and Hebron replete with challenges that emerge amid preparations for the wedding.[18] In addition, the hip hop group DAM released a song dealing with obstacles to marriage across the Green Line that contains the lyric "I loved you so much, Ramallah girl / but you're metres away and off-limits to me / if only you were from Russia and your mum was called Natasha..." – in which case the speaker would be able to marry her.[19] But despite these artistic works and the scholarship on Palestinian women's reality, very little research has holistically addressed the structure of the daily lives of Palestinian women living inside the Green Line.

This article presents the case of married Palestinian women residing in the centrally located Triangle region, known as *al-Muthallath* area.[20] It comprises two groups of women from the West Bank with

15 Suhad Daher-Nashif, "Vulnerability and Precarity of Palestinian Women in the Naqab," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2022), pp. 703 - 720.

16 Ruth Preser, *Bare Lives: Women without Status in Haifa and the North of Israel* (Haifa: Isha L'Isha Feminist Institute, 2020) [Hebrew].

17 Both films are available on Netflix.

18 See: "Fustān al-Arūs," YouTube, 11/1/2020, accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://bit.ly/3XMZmXy

19 The track appears in the short film *Targeted Citizen* [*muwāṭin mustahdaf*], directed and produced by Rachel Leah Jones; see: "Fīdiyū Muwāṭin Mustahdaf," Adalah Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://bit.ly/3ILr2YB

20 This region comprises the area of Um al-Fahem and Baqa Al-Gharbiyyeh at its northern side, and the area of Taybeh and Tira at its south.

Palestinian citizenship and identification who are married to Palestinian men living within Israel with Israeli citizenship. The first group of women, most of whom were married prior to the 2003 Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order),[21] who carry identity cards or residence permits. The second group of women, married after the passage of the law, and do not hold identity cards or residence permits and, in most cases, live with family by overstaying their "family visit permits", usually valid for only three to four days. To renew this permit, women must return to the West Bank and reapply every time their current permit expires. Hence, most women prefer to take the risk and remain in Israel in secret than to put themselves through an uncertain, inhumane process that routinely keeps them away from their children for months at a time.

Because the article concerns two groups of women, it contrasts the experiences of women who were married before and after the passage of the aforementioned Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law. Pursuant to the measure, the reunification of Palestinian families was prohibited if one spouse is an Israeli national and the other holds Palestinian citizenship and lives in the West Bank or Gaza. Moreover, the law was conspicuously amended in 2007 to ban family reunification when one spouse is a citizen or resident of Iran, Lebanon, Syria, or Iraq (known in Israeli law as "enemy states").[22] In July 2021, the Israeli government failed to renew this law, which in theory meant that Palestinian families living inside Israel or in the Palestinian territories became eligible for family reunification and granting Israeli citizenship to spouses who are Palestinian nationals. Yet this "failure" may not have been the result of a principled rejection of the law's inhumanity or infringement of basic human rights as much as it reflected the strategic considerations of rival right-wing parties that, despite disagreeing on domestic issues and competing with each other, harbour the same attitude to Palestinian rights. In 2021, then-Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked upheld the law by denying the family reunification requests that her office received. Moreover, it was clear from our interviews that the circumstances of Palestinian families have seen no change. In March 2022, the Knesset began to renew the law in a more extreme format through consensus between right-wing parties, both inside and outside the coalition.[23]

In addition to the policies of discrimination and segregation that Israel's colonial system enforces throughout Palestinian society on both sides of the Green Line, some terms of the Oslo Accords (1993) compounded the suffering of married Palestinian women in Israel. For instance, the Palestinian Authority cannot record the birth of children to Palestinian women from the West Bank or Gaza who are residents of Israel, nor can it grant their children national ID numbers or Palestinian identity cards. Thus, these women are unable to bring their children with them in the event that they face political or social violence and wish to return to their families in the West Bank or Gaza.[24] Remarkably, pressure from Palestinian feminist movements led to the passage of an amended version of the Basic Law (2003) allowing mothers to transfer their citizenship to their children. But because this rule excludes children born to a father with an Israeli citizenship,[25] married Palestinian women residing in Israel without identity cards or residence permits are forced to remain in the area illegally and evade the Israeli authorities, at times enduring domestic violence in the process, in order to stay with their children.

---

21 To read the full text of the law, its amendments, and petitions submitted to repeal it, see: Adalah Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, *Qānūn al-Muwāṭana wa-l-Dukhūl ilā Isrāʾīl (amr muʾaqqat)*, accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://bit.ly/3IN4gzJ

22 Ibid.

23 Barhoum Jaraisey, "Qānūn al-Muwāṭana wa-l-Dukhūl ilā Isrāʾīl (amr sāʿa – qānūn ṭawāriʾ) 2022," *Special Report*, Madar: The Palestinian Centre for Israeli Studies, 13/3/2022, accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://did.li/HBM5q

24 Yael Stein, "Forbidden Families: Family Unification and Child Registration in East Jerusalem," B'tselem; Center for the Defence of the Individual, 2004.

25 Islah Jad, "Feminist Reading of the Palestinian Constitution Draft," *Review of Women's Studies*, no. 2 (2003), pp. 8 - 12.

Conceptual Framework

This study employs intersectionality[26] as a conceptual framework capable of deconstructing the interplay between social, demographic, and political factors, and interpreting how this intersectionality shapes the lives of these women. Numerous feminist theorists and sociologists have noted the importance of applying intersectionality as a conceptual framework in feminist scholarship, as it can highlight the interaction of various hegemonic forces and how their intersection compounds the marginalization and vulnerability of women, especially those belonging to minority groups that, in addition to patriarchal structures, have suffered (or continue to suffer) racialized colonial oppression.

In a challenge to one-dimensional approaches to the experiences of women, US feminist scholar, civil rights activist, and lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the concept of intersectionality in 1989 and argued that these experiences are shaped by interactions between several factors including race, social class, and gender.[27] Much feminist scholarship has employed intersectionality in addressing women as not only women but also racial minorities, members of the working class, lesbians, or colonial subjects.[28] Phoenix and Pattynama[29] argue that the concept of intersectionality "foregrounds a richer and more complex ontology than approaches that attempt to reduce people to one category at a time".[30] Hence, we believe that intersectionality can serve as a key framework for understanding the lives of Palestinian women in contrast with women living in other contexts of oppression.

This study argues that the intersection of political, social, and gendered forces – which themselves overlap with demographic factors such as age, economic status, number of children, and level of support from natal and spousal families – makes these women's lives "precarious", as defined by Judith Butler. Every human being, for Butler, is in some way precarious, because although we all need food, water, shelter, and protection, but the degree of precariousness differs according to one's capacity for self-protection and self-defence. The most extreme form of vulnerability if precarity, and it occurs when a person is subjected to violence and poverty but is unable to stand up to this oppression, and has not one to protect them. Many have critiqued Butler's generalization in framing vulnerability as a need that all people share. For instance, Joronen and Rose recommend engaging with precarity as a socio-political, racial, spatial, or gendered issue rather than as an existential prerequisite that all of humans has in common.[31] Based on this position, this study argues that married Palestinian women inside Israel are denied their basic human rights and, given the lives of precarity (starting from their political, social, economic, and gender positionality) that they live, serve as a striking example of the limitations of such a generalization.

This paper illustrates that historical and political events such as the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (2003) and the Oslo Accords (1993) have subjected Palestinian women to a hierarchy of precarity. Through this structure, it seeks to understand their vulnerability and the coping and adaptation strategies they practice in their daily lives. We argue that the creation of these levels of precarity is a colonial policy Israel has pursued to create uncertainty and instability, weakening society as a whole and especially

26 Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in: Martha Albertson Fineman (ed.), *The Public Nature of Private Violence: Women and the Discovery of Abuse* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 93 - 118.

27 Ibid.

28 Avtar Brah & Ann Phoenix, "Ain't I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3 (2004), pp. 75 - 86.

29 Ann Phoenix & Pamela Pattynama, "Intersectionality," *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2006), pp. 187 - 192.

30 Ibid., p. 187.

31 Mikko Joronen & Mitch Rose, "Vulnerability and its Politics: Precarity and the Woundedness of Power," *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 45, no. 6 (2021), pp. 1402 - 1418.

women. This study is also trying to understand the role that Palestinian society inside Israel could play in either mitigating or exacerbating the vulnerability of women who lack identity cards or residency.

Research Methodology

To document and grasp the essence of women's lives in their own words, this study employs a feminist epistemology arguing that women's voices, narratives, and analyses of their reality are key tenets of knowledge production. This is especially true of women who are marginalized and living under oppressive structures, where oppression is an epistemic privilege.[32] Applying the lens of phenomenology, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with ten women who are Palestinian nationals living in the Triangle region inside the Green Line (regardless of whether they have identity cards or residence permits). To formulate structured questions, we used the results of previous research on the same issue elsewhere in Palestine (the Negev and Haifa), as well as scholarship on citizenship and its effect on women's lives in other world contexts. Further, the authors discuss the need to modify, add, or remove questions after the first five interviews.

To recruit women, we employed the "snowball" method in which one participant lead to another, as well as seeking help from community institutions in promoting the study and obtaining names of women who expressed willingness to participate. We contacted these women after the respective institution received their permission. One of the main reasons why we were unable to reach a larger number of interviewees is that many women declined to participate on grounds of not having residence permits or their permits having expired – something that would evoke anxiety and hesitation about participating in any study.

This study adheres to the ethics of scientific research. Authors obtained informed consent to participate, used pseudonymization, removed any personal details that could reveal a participant's identity (e.g., hometown and current place of residence),[33] emphasized that participants are free to give or decline consent to have the audio of the interview recorded, and reiterating that they may withdraw from the study at any point without consequences. All interviews were transcribed verbatim prior to analysis of the data. To ensure the integrity of our analysis, we began by each reviewing different interviews individually, read the others, then agreed on the final analytical themes to evaluate in the results section.

Results

1. Participants' Economic and Demographic Data

Ten women from different social, economic, and educational backgrounds (see table) took part in this study. Despite the small sample size, these women reflect the varied potential backgrounds of married Palestinian women living in the Triangle region within the Green Line who came from West Bank villages and cities.

---

32 Sandra Harding, "Feminist Standpoints," in: Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (ed.), *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012), pp. 46 - 64.

33 When quoting participants, we have used nondescript names for some places to protect their privacy. For instance, instead of directly quoting "in Jatt", we have written "in town" or "in the West Bank".

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant name (pseudonym)	Amal	Omaima	Rehab	Afnan	Sana	Zeina	Faten	Nour	Nevine	Hasna
Education	Secondary diploma; 4 years academy	Secondary diploma	Up to Year 5	12 years; 4 years academy	12 years	12 years; 4 years academy	12 years	12 years	12 years; 4 years academy	12 years; training courses
Age	34 years, 5 months	76 years	47 years	43 years	42 years	45 years	38 years	41 years	45 years	67 years
Age at marriage	23 years	27 years	45 years	17 years	21 years	24 years	33 years	20 years	16 years, 5 months	21 years
Husband's age at marriage	31 years	26 years	80 years	27 years	28 years	33 years	61 years	24 years	29 years	28 years
Occupation	None	Teacher (retired; currently volunteers at educational programme)	None	Community human rights activist	None	Works at a clothing retailer	None	Caretaker at private nursery	Works at association, teaches courses on personal and professional development	Previously worked on various projects with NGOs
Husband's occupation	Works at factory	Teacher	None	Works at excavation company	Works at factory	None	None	Businessman	None	Teacher (retired)
Number of children	3	-	7 from first marriage	2 (also working)	5	5	2	5	5	1
Single wife or one of several	Single	-	Single, third wife (first deceased, second divorced)	Single	Single	Single	Second wife	Single	Single	`Single
ID, residency, visit permit	Residency	Residency and citizenship	Residency	ID	ID	Annual residency	Family visit permit	Family visit permit	ID	ID
Economic status	Average	Good	Good	Very good	Below average	Below average	Below average	Average to very good	Average	Comfortable

Source: prepared by the authors.

The results show that the participants live in one of three civil-political situations, or what may be termed three kinds of precarity. The first kind applies to women with identity cards, most of whom obtained them prior to the imposition of the 2003 Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law. Valid for two years, this document gives them the right to residency, not naturalization, as well as to work, open a bank account, access health insurance, and so on. The second kind of precarity affects women without identity cards but with residence permits that must be renewed annually for them to be able to remain in the country, work, access healthcare, or open a bank account; most of these women were married after the passage of the Citizenship law. The third kind of precarity relates to a segment of women who only hold "family visit permits" valid for a few days (usually three to four) and, hence, cannot work or access any other civil rights. Upon the permit's expiration, they are obliged to exit the Green Line and return to the West Bank.[34] Despite that women from all three categories endure suffering, it is the third group that faces the greatest and harshest difficulties.

2. Different Motives, Same Outcome: Why and How Marriages Happen

Interviews in this study reveal several reasons that lead women to decide (or want) to get married within the Green Line, when the most prominently motives based on gendered considerations such as that society regards women above the age of 30 as too old. Faten stated:

> *To be honest, I was 33, and there's a very high rate of unmarried women in the West Bank, and I wanted to get married. That's all. It's normal for one to want to get married. For me, I spent time with him and felt attraction between us, so I decided to stay with him – let alone the fact that I wanted to get married and settle down to begin with. I'm a girl who likes adventures and surprises, so to me life inside [the Green Line] was like a different world. It's like going to another country, like Europe or America. I'd never been inside [the Green Line] before, and I didn't know my way around. I was keen to get married, to try something new.*

In addition to anxiety over finding someone to marry and a desire to have new experiences, other reasons included family coincidences. For instance, Hasna mentioned that her engagement was originally an arrangement for her older sister, but the latter decided to stay in Jordan and continue her studies. Because "[the groom's parents] were already on their way", Hasna inevitably became the bride-to-be, and the marriage took place after mutual attraction was felt between the two.

Three participants cited another reason related to the socioeconomic circumstances of wives and their families. Rehab recalled that her economic situation was "below zero […] I worked from eight to five o'clock at a nursery school making NIS 500 a month. I had seven kids to feed and put through school. Widow, divorcée, it doesn't matter – you still have to keep going and provide for your children any way you can". Zeina added:

> *You can't rely on anyone. My elder brother had a job making NIS 800 a month 25 years ago. My mum was a widow; where was she going to work? She was uneducated. There was no work and no insurance, so we took care of everything ourselves. We had to grow up when we were still kids, isn't it. My mum was sick, so I was on my own, studying and teaching myself. I turned down a couple suitors, and my mum asked, "how long are you going to keep saying no? Just take him!" So I said, "if you like him, Mum, fine, I'll take him." I mean, it wasn't a matter of a relationship or me knowing him beforehand. It was just a marriage of protection*

34 Rehab's was the only case of a six-month visit permit being granted. She reports that this was with the help of her brother, who works for the Palestinian Authority.

for the girl. I was in my last year of school, and it was normal for every girl to get married. But that's how it happened: we were married a month or two later.

The argument that "marriage is protection for women" [*zījat al-bint sutra*] in the above quote constitutes an additional gendered motivation whereby society views men as the "defenders" of women, who need their "protection". The word for this kind of "protection" [Arabic: *sutra*, lit. "something that covers"] carries gendered connotations and can be interpreted in different ways depending on how it is meant. When it is applied to a man, it connotes economic security that keeps him from having to seek out the charity of others. When applied to a woman, however, it connotes the kind of gendered social "protection" that keeps her safe from the words of others who, when doubts arise about her behaviour, may denigrate her as "inferior" or call into question her "honour".

Some participants indicated that a lack of awareness was a factor that facilitated the decision to get married without much thought given to the future. Nevine, who was married at the age of 16, stated that "honestly, the issue was that I was a child: I still used to play with my friends. It didn't make any sense to me". Nour (whose mother was remarried to a man from Israel after the death of her father) added: "It was my mum's wish from the beginning: 'it's best you stay here near me,[35] and later on you'll get an identity card' – you know, for security's sake. So, at the beginning, I didn't think it'd be too difficult for me, even though it's hard now. You could say [it happened] in a state of ignorance. I didn't know whether or not this would benefit me in the future".

Here, it should be mentioned that only in two cases did the women's families set conditions for the marriage: first, when Omaima's family stipulated that the couple have a house of their own; and second, when Nour's mother specified a large *mahr* (wedding dowry) and *muʾakhkhar* (deferred dowry) payment.[36] Nour recalled that

the muqaddam and the muʾakhkhar were fairly large – out of fear, honestly. As you know, [parents] were very afraid that the '48 Arabs, God forbid, would cheat on and leave [their daughters], that it would be something temporary. My mum knew he loved me very much, so, out of concern for me, she set a large muqaddam and muʾakhkhar [a condition for the marriage], and, of course, our own house to live in.

This mother's actions may be interpreted as an astute awareness of the dangers that can come with marriage inside the Green Line and wanting to protect her daughter in some way. In most cases, introductions and wedding arrangements were made through kinship ties between relatives or family friendships. Nevine, for instance, stated that "for us, it happened through family ties. My aunts are from here, and I'm originally from the [so-and-so] family here in town, so all my relatives were around. My dad was studying at university [outside Palestine], then the '48 partition happened, and he wound up by himself – his siblings over here, him [in the West Bank]".

Rehab, who decided to remarry because she had already married off all her children from her first marriage, mentioned that her daughter's husband was the intermediary for her second marriage. Meanwhile, Sana added that "my [future] uncle-in-law knew my dad, who used to visit him often on the way into Israel before things got worse". Only in one case were introductions made via a "matchmaker" [*khaṭṭāba*]. Two cases, Afnan and Omaima, were "love" marriages. The former was born and raised

35 It is worth noting that after the death of Nour's father, her mother married a man from within the Green Line and moved there to live with him. They have a residence permit.

36 The concept of *muʾakhkhar* (or *mutàakhkhir*) refers to the amount paid by the husband to the wife over the course of their marriage or in the event of a divorce.

inside Israel, where she had spent all her life with her parents who moved there following their marriage; the latter, who married her maternal cousin, used to visit the family on the other side of the Green Line often on family visits.

3. A Mountainous Journey: Challenges Facing Women and Their Families

Participants identified many hardships they face throughout their daily lives. These can be divided into social, political, and economic challenges, and because they all intersect to shape women's daily lives, they are inextricable from one another. Some women spoke of adjustment difficulties at the beginning due to differences in customs, traditions, and culture such as clothing, cooking, speech, and so on. For instance, Zeina recalled:

> *when we got married, I was shocked. It's so much, you're only ever seeing the same person come and go. I like things a certain way, though. The food's different, the accent's different, their customs, weddings – everything's different. The first year was so hard that I thought about divorce. I couldn't get used to anything: different food, different breakfast, different way of drinking tea and water – everything. I felt like I'm not meant to be here, like this isn't for me. Anything I'd do they'd criticize. I'd say a word like hayyo [here it is], and they'd criticize me. So, I told my mum, "That's it, I don't want him, I want a divorce": if he wants, he can come stay here.*

As for social difficulties that women face, some participants report being the subject of commentary and "hint-dropping" [*tasmīʿ kalām*] from (non-family) members of the community about clothing, speech patterns, and so on. "Sometimes they'll say that West Bank girls are only looking for money", Rehab asserted. Amal stated:

> *when I first got married, it was a matter of [West] Bank versus Israel. You could go spend time with people and they might have no idea you're from the Bank. When they're talking among themselves and they want to make fun of someone, they'll call them a ḍiffāwī [West Banker]. My husband tells me to let it go in one ear and out the other. I used to argue with them: "right, so what's wrong with people from the West Bank?" I'd hear it from lots of people, even relatives – even kids playing in the street, one'll make fun of another by calling him a ḍiffāwī! It's not the kids' fault or the parents' fault. There's no difference in the end; we're all Palestinians.*

In addition to being looked down on, three women spoke of how their children are treated differently at school. Nour commented:

> *My older daughter went through a period where she didn't want to talk to anyone. She didn't want to go to school because the teacher treats each of them as "so-and-so's daughter". They knew my daughter from the beginning, and she'd come home and cry. For a while, she stayed home and refused to go to school, so the nursery teacher brought her classmates over to our house so we could get her out of the state she was in. This didn't just happen to my eldest daughter, it happened to all my kids, old and young. They treat them differently – "oh, his mum's from the West Bank", like we're second-class, even though all my kids are outstanding students.*

Another difficulty that women encounter among the surrounding Palestinian community inside Israel is from the business owners who take advantage of their need to work, and utilize their political vulnerability by hiring them for low wages and with no rights. Out of laziness and apathy, proprietors rarely trouble

themselves to register these women despite their being legally entitled to some rights (pursuant to the Foreign Workers Law).[37] For instance, Zeina explained that:

> *when those of us from the West Bank work here and have permits, employers have to go to the Labour Office themselves and request our paperwork and entitlements. At this point, they'll tell you "Why should I have to go and spend money", even though it's the same [money that they are already] paying for health insurance and pensions – I'm not sure about the laws. They try to avoid [the responsibility]. Lots of people here try not to give you a payslip. But I need one, because every month I pay NIS 300 for private health insurance. I have to work; I have five kids and my husband doesn't work. I spend my money on the house, on food, drink, and clothes for my daughters. My husband receives NIS 3,200, which we spend on water and electricity bills, housing tax, and health insurance.*

Alongside exploitation by employers, some families are cheated by lawyers who charge them large sums to manage their cases – in some instances, only for the family to discover that their lawyer had never so much as looked at their file. Further, the case of women without residence permits or identity cards presents an additional material burden, as most of them work for low wages, lack basic rights, and also pay NIS 300 per month in private health insurance premiums so they can receive treatment if need be. Nour mentioned that she opened one private health insurance policy inside Israel and another in the West Bank in order to fund her procedures.

> *The same way I have health insurance here, I also have it in my town[in the West Bank]. I pay for it annually in case something happens to me here and they don't admit me, so I'm forced to go over there [for treatment]. I had several operations last year; three I had done at a private hospital. What initially led me to have them done there was that I didn't have time to submit claims and wait for approval. Even still, the insurance I do have doesn't cover everything. Certain tests and medications that I need are covered, but other things won't be. Now there are things that, in such urgent circumstances, I was forced to do in the West Bank, so that's the reason why. If I wanted to do them specifically in, say, Nazareth or someplace, it'd cost much more than it should. Here, it's a bit cheaper.*

Nour added that she prefers having operations done in the West Bank, because there will be people around to support and take care of her as she recovers: her siblings. Even when on good terms with her husband's family, women tend to find this relationship limited; they do not receive the same support from their husband's parents or siblings when they fall ill as they do from a sister, brother, or brother's wife.

Moreover, there is a financial burden related to the husband's economic situation. Many participants reported that their husbands do not work despite children and the wife's meagre monthly salary, which is also being spent on private health insurance. Afnan, an activist who works with families impacted by the Citizenship Law, emphasized that more than 60 per cent of families were living below the poverty line, and that this figure had climbed to 80 per cent since the COVID-19 crisis. Afnan mentioned that women with visit permits but not identity cards were not given access to the vaccine during the quarantine period, prompting activists to demand vaccination rights for these women as well.

Although women without the right to residency who can only obtain "family visit permits" usually enter the Green Line and overstay their permit's expiration, there is no guarantee they will receive a new

37 This 1991 law identifies the eligibility requirements for employing foreign labourers and obtaining work permits, as well as the employer's duties to foreign workers and to the state. For more details, see: "Qānūn al-ʿUmmāl al-Ajānib (Qawānīn)," *Kol Zchut*, accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://did.li/4MeIw. It is worth noting here that we are dealing with general Israeli law toward foreigners in spite of our conviction that Palestinian women are in their home country and are not migrants or foreigners.

one when they apply for a renewal to visit their families. Thus, these women travel to visit their families only once a year, enduring psychological strain and dejection due to the separation. Many women spoke about the pain of their children being unable to have a relationship with their aunts and uncles. There seems to be an uncomfortable rift between natal families and in-laws, which causes depression among women on the way back from visiting their families in the West Bank. One participant, Omaima,[38] spoke of a strong relationship between her children and their aunt in the West Bank; she and her children (all of whom are over 18 years of age) all have Israeli citizenship and identification.

Unlike women with only visit permits, those with identity cards or annual residence permits spoke of somewhat comfortable life circumstances; they are able to visit their families whenever they want and to work without fear. Yet they described hardships of a different kind. For instance, because they do not hold Israeli passports, they cannot easily travel and transit with family outside the country. To renew their annual residency, women must provide documentation to prove they are mothers and that they live inside Israel, such as school paperwork, tax forms (for those who are employed), and bank statements. Sana described this annual inconvenience as the greatest burden she faces, revealing that she sometimes lacks the mental energy to go through the process. In the same context, Amal stated:

> *It's not easy. Before the renewal appointment, we spend a while gathering paperwork from the schools, health insurance – proof that you live here – water, electricity, your bills. All this means that my husband has to chase down the papers from the municipality to Hadera and the Interior Ministry, then go [submit them]. Then they get in touch with him about coming to pick up the permit from Hebron [i.e., somewhere in the West Bank].*

Afnan recalled that the Interior Ministry had recently requested that she submit reference letters from five people, testifying that they know her and that she is "fit" for residency in the interior.

> *The request forms are available in two languages: English and Hebrew. One of the challenges these families face is the Hebrew language, meaning a family will fill out a form incorrectly, misunderstand the questions, then answer them wrong and have the request denied or sent back. Lawyers will expect compensation to assist in filling the form and to stamp it – and these families live below the poverty line. So, all of these complications across [government] departments are a hindrance. It's a struggle we go through on a daily basis.*

Language, hence, remains a significant barrier for many women to this day. As Amal explained:

> *Me, for instance, there are places that I can't go, Hebrew-wise, unless my husband is with me. I did study Hebrew reading and writing; I mean, there are words I can say, and I understand some of it, but it's not like someone who learned Hebrew here [in Israel]. I can't go to hospital by myself. Even when we'd run into people that work with my husband and they'd try to talk to me, I couldn't get by. I'd start to cry after they left. It really bothered me because Hebrew is the foundation. Besides, I wanted to study medicine, and I had high marks. I've spoken English my whole life: I could do anything. That's why when I came here, I felt inadequate.*

Alongside these challenges is the humiliation women experience when in the West Bank and on the way back to their homes inside the Green Line. When a woman reaches the Israeli military checkpoint, she is asked to park "on the right" to be searched. This involves getting out of the car, opening all the doors, and removing baggage to be searched by border patrol soldiers and their K-9s. Accompanying all this is

38 Omaima was the only participant with Israeli citizenship, which she explained is due to her being born before the 1967 occupation of the West Bank in one of the regions subsequently classified as within the Green Line.

the humiliation of being asked for a DNA test; families are required to take one, which can cost tens of thousands of shekels, to prove the parentage of their children.[39] On this, Afnan commented:

> *One of the things we're calling for them to stop doing is the DNA test. They ask families to prove their kids are their kids. So, my response was: our children are not illegitimate [awlād zinā]; why should we have to prove they're ours? […] The test is very expensive, financially […] a single test with translation costs NIS 2,500 to 4,000 […] and that's just one of several requests[.] Another point is that these parents are not the legal guardians [waṣiyya qānūniyya] of their children. I know that from personal experience. My son was three days away from turning 18 when he fell and injured his leg at work, and they started talking about amputating the foot […] My husband and older son were with him from the moment he got hurt and went to hospital. They left in the evening, and I stayed with the kid[.] They admitted him, then prepped him and took him into the operating room. Later, the anaesthesiologist came and asked for my identity card so I could give authorization, so I gave it to him […] then the doctor came back with security, tells me I'm not my children's legal guardian. I was absolutely devastated.*

Part of the financial burden these families bear comes when requesting a permit from the local (Israeli) authorities. This necessitates that the family's tax account balance be zero; they must have paid all local taxes before they can submit a request. Such material, social, and political inconveniences in turn create a psychological burden that can lead to, inter alia, chronic anxiety and depression.

Remarkably, only one of the participants, Rehab, reported having had problems with the Palestinian Authority as well when applying for residency. "The Palestinians gave us a hard time, too", she stated. "You have to go to all the government services in the West Bank: the municipality, the [Palestinian Military] Liaison. The 'permit' had been ready for five days before they called me and I picked it up. Also, you have to pay NIS 50 […] for every document."

4. Psychological Implications of Women's Sociopolitical Situation

Most of the participants, regardless of their legal status, spoke of the effect these hardships have on their mental health. For instance, Faten related:

> *Most days, I stay at home: how can that be good for my state of mind? It's because I don't belong, and when you don't belong in a society where the customs are different, everything's different from what you grew up with and what you're used to, it's hard. It's even harder because you're not acknowledged here. You can't drive, and the area where we live doesn't have public transportation: you either have a car, or you stay at home. I'm mentally exhausted because I've not been able to go anywhere or get things done. So many obstacles – one after another […] just because I don't have an identity card. Even if I had residency, it'd still be limited; not everything's allowed. Residency doesn't give you everything. There's another problem: in this state, you're either a citizen, or you don't exist [yā bitkūnī muwāṭineh, yā bitkūnīsh].*

In many instances, we found that psychological exhaustion results from women being away from their parents and birth families. Nour described this sensation as follows:

> *There's something I'm always telling them: as soon as I get to the West Bank, I feel like I have revived again. It's like I'm a new woman. I start to look different, my mood changes, everything about me is full of energy. But then when I come back here, I suddenly feel discouraged. Over*

39 This refers to families where the mother is requesting a renewal of her residency or identity card.

there, I can find someone to spend time with, someone to talk to. Sometimes you need a chat with a sister, sometimes you need a brother when, for example, you have a problem at home with your husband, your kids, your neighbours, your in-laws. Sometimes you need a brother's support, sometimes a sister's. It's not always about needing money – it's not always material.

The sense of alienation is compounded by the fact that even women with residency can only host family members on very rare occasions. On the need to be close to one's parents and siblings, Faten spoke of the support she receives from her family, how happy she is when she visits them, and how that has affected her psychologically:

Believe me, every time I go, I feel five years younger. I'd be lying if I told you otherwise. All of us get together: six sisters, two brothers, my mum and dad, and my nieces and nephews – wow, more than 20 people – and we sit, chat, and joke. Thank God I have my mum and dad, I have my siblings to support me. I have a dad who won't leave me alone if he sees me upset until I've laughed and forgotten all about it. It could be him, my mum, or one of my siblings. [In Israel], no one supports me emotionally: nobody's going to come ask me "what's bothering you?"

Afnan, who described herself as strong during the interview, cried when we asked her about how her situation has affected her, despite having an identity card she renews every two years. This leads us to conclude that obtaining an identity card does not equate to political or social immunity, but rather creates a different layer of precarity. In addition to the lack of emotional support within Israel and distance-related mental fatigue, the women identified the psychological pressures they face out of anxiety that their renewal request will be denied, every year for annual residency and every two years for the identity card. This creates a constant state of tension, psychological instability, and anxiety that in many cases becomes chronic.

The study has shown how most of the women experience physical or psychological complications – sometimes both kinds at once – due to their circumstances. A woman who, to be close to her children and husband, overstays her permit lives in constant fear, especially when leaving town. Some of the women have been caught by the Israeli authorities, deported to the West Bank, and banned from re-entering, at times being kept away from their infant children for months. For instance, Nour explained her family's situation and the physical toll of bypass roads:

If I'm not there, the house goes to ruin. It was almost rubble by the end of my deportation. My daughters were young; it's not like today, when they can look after themselves. They were in year five or six. All of this happened 15 years ago. It wasn't easy for them – there was no one to look after them. There were several times I was pregnant and miscarried out of exhaustion from my trips back and forth over the crossing. I've had about four miscarriages. It wasn't easy for me at all. It was really difficult. The girls were in bad shape psychologically. My older daughter was really struggling, always crying, not focused on her studies,her siblings too. By the time I was deported, I'd had four or five miscarriages, and I'd just given birth. They used to bring the newborn to visit me so I could see him for a few hours, then they'd take him away.

Nour's testimony shows how constant fear, psychological strain, and bodily fatigue negatively impact women's mental and physical health, as well as that of their children. Zeina, a further example, mentioned that she has diabetes and high blood pressure, which she attributes to the psychological stress she experienced while holding only a visit permit and no residency.

A significant consequence of this experience for many women is a sense of regret for having married a Palestinian man living inside the Green Line. When asked about the most valuable lesson they learned

from this experience or what they would change if they could go back in time, several participants reported that they would not have married a citizen of Israel and would rather have married within the West Bank. Although the majority are on good terms with their in-laws and reported strong relationships with their husbands, the injustice and adversity of daily life and its physical and psychological consequences have led them to regret the decision to marry and live within the '48 regions. Sana, for instance, stated:

Right, sometimes you hit a dead end under all life's stress. When I think about separating, of course I think about going back to my parents' place. I'd sooner go live with them and sleep on a mat than live in humiliation. But I was thinking about my kids. I hear about and see a lot what happens to the kids' future when the mum separates from the dad or the dad from the mum. Besides, my situation is different from someone else's. I'm from the West Bank: who's going to protect me? Who's going to look after my kids, put them through school, make sure they're on the right track, and guide them toward their interests and goals? Who's going to do that when I'm already in a vulnerable position? No one. So, I thought about my kids, about priorities, [and decided] to stay with them and make sacrifices for them. That's it.

As mentioned earlier, a mother cannot obtain national ID numbers for children who have Israeli identity cards and citizenship. They are not Palestinian nationals, meaning that the mother cannot return to the West Bank in the event of a separation because she cannot register them at schools, health centres, or other services. For their children's sake, then, women prefer to remain inside the Green Line and put up with the difficulties. However, there were four women – all of whom hold residency or identity cards – who expressed no regrets, in fact stating that they would do it all over again if they could go back in time. Yet they did take their parents' advice to marry their daughters to men from inside Israel, something they agreed is not as easy as it used to be. Things are complicated today; one must look into the suitor and his family before agreeing, as well as take political hardships into consideration.

5. While the World Sleeps: Strategies of Adaptation and Defiance

The interviews revealed that women use several strategies, individual and collective, to cope with the pressures of life, change their circumstances, and develop the capacity to carry on living for their and their children's sake. Individually, women seek emotional support from their friends, while others delve into religious practice. Omaima states, "Look, everyone encounters difficulties sometimes. I read the Qurʾan a lot: 'Truly, it is in the remembrance of God that hearts find peace' [Sūrat al-Raʿd, 28].[40] So, you [can indeed] find peace. Besides, I don't have anyone here. No sister, no daughter, no one to go visit. All you have to do is read the Qurʾan for a while, and you calm down."

While some of the women learned Hebrew on their own, others studied it at free courses offered by local councils or municipalities. These institutions also often fund free vocational courses for women to take advantage of, through which they begin careers and can self-fund their projects. Nevine explained how she came to open an entire business starting with a simple course at the local council.

I learned how to make sweets, things like that, through a course here at first. Then, I wanted to improve so much that I went and took a course abroad. That was it; I'd set my mind to the idea that this is something I enjoy. I promoted myself on Facebook, then started getting kitchenware that I didn't use to have. Then I got the idea to teach at this level here. We had the first few courses, then it developed into multiple locations. I started teaching at a school whose nutrition department was already fully equipped, so that's how I got going.

40 Translation: M.A.S. Abdel Haleem.

Some of the women had the same skills as others, especially "local girls" [*banāt al-balad*], and thus launched and expanded joint ventures together. Hasna recalled, "Yes, we used to take women at the retirement home on outings for fun. [Then,] myself and four or five of our activist girls from town opened a women's forum. We brought in every kind of researcher or lecturer to raise awareness among women here."

In addition to personal projects, women use the strategy of undocumented employment in the private sector including as a teacher at a private nursery, a salesperson at a clothing retailer, or a private home tutor. Despite low wages and the absence of labour rights in these lines of work, such jobs provide women with meaningful financial and moral support through which they can become increasingly involved in the community, as well as cultivate economic autonomy to empower them and boost their self-confidence.

Another strategy that women deploy involves improving their social standing by forming close relationships with their in-laws and the surrounding community. For them, a strong bond between family members is a source of support and some of the security they need. To maintain a good relationship with in-laws – taking part in joyful and sorrowful occasions, fulfilling duties to one another, and being there for each other in times of need – helps strengthen their status in the family, making it easier for them to be accepted and no longer treated as strangers. Omaima, for instance, mentioned:

> *My sister-in-law has eye problems and doesn't like to travel without me. I've taken her on Umrah [the lesser pilgrimage to Mecca in Islam] twice, just the two of us together the whole time. I like taking her places. She's also unmarried and by herself at home, so when we want to go out or travel or something, I tell [my husband] let's take her with us for a change of scenery.*

Moreover, some participants highlighted the role that their children's academic excellence (in school or university) and good character [*murabbayīn*] play in improving their social standing; their children are a testament to their success and integrity and a source of pride for them before society. Amal, for instance, remarked: "I draw strength from the fact that my life needs to keep going and my daughters need to be the best they can be – my son, too."

6. Praise for the Women [and Men] of the Family: Contributing Factors to Coping with and Facing the Challenges of Daily Life

All participants spoke of support, past and present, from their husbands – emotionally, financially, and bureaucratically. Most of the husbands work tirelessly to help their wives obtain residency and identity cards. Indeed, for most women, the spousal relationship is an essential source of warmth and intimacy, not of power and control. Omaima recalled that:

> *at first, there were no nurseries. My in-laws used to look after the kids. I have three boys, no girls. Of course, there was no car to take us to and from school, so in the morning I'd take the boy to school, then pick him up in the afternoon and take him home. My husband used to help a lot, first of all with cooking. If I hadn't cooked anything before leaving, he'd go prepare the food before I got back. We used to help each other with the kids a lot.*

Amal added:

> *My husband is very compassionate and kind-hearted, which might have been what encouraged me to marry him. Some married couples from the West Bank might find the whole residency and paperwork issue to be an inconvenience for them, but he's not that way at all. I indicate that I'm frustrated about it sometimes, and he stays with me and calms me down.*

In addition to the support of their husbands, all participants spoke of help they have received from in-laws in their time of need. Most reported having a strong, close relationship with their husbands' families. Nevine, for instance, described her relationship with her husband's parents:

> *To be honest, when I first got married, his parents didn't treat me like a daughter-in-law, so when I was annoyed with him at the beginning, life was hard as husband and wife. Of course, there were problems and arguments, like when we weren't on the same page due to the age difference. My refuge through all that was my mother-in-law, may she rest in peace. She was very good to me and loved me very much – my sisters-in-law were the same way. My mother-in-law bathed my eldest son until he was a year and a half old: that's how close we were, and still are, with them.*

Another source of support came from neighbours and the nearby environment. Rehab, for example, stated that her source of strength is "God Almighty and my neighbours [*rabb al-ʿālamīn wa-jārātī*]. We tell each other everything [laughs]". Mothers also found support from their teenage or adult children, who help out with housework and take care of their younger siblings when the mothers are away from home, visiting family, or receiving medical treatment in the West Bank.

Here, it should be noted that the only family relationship that remains tense to this day is Sana's, who explained that hers was a "substitute" marriage [*zawāj badal*].[41] She married the brother of her sister-in-law, but the initial marriage (between her brother and his wife, her sister-in-law) failed, causing problems that led to her being ostracized and not treated as a family member.

Significantly, a factor that contributes to women's adaptation, coping, and ability to live their lives is access to free courses (on Hebrew, cosmetology, cooking, etc.) organized by various institutions within Palestinian society inside Israel. Those courses empower women to be independent when they go to organizations and contribute through self-employment, or to find work in their town's private sector. There are private sector cash in hand jobs, or "black work", as the women call it: a direct translation of the Hebrew term for self-employment, or work for hire without official registration, guarantees, or rights. Amal reported, "The children come to my place, and I teach them here at home". Some participants indicated that such work has been helpful financially, but simultaneously unjust in terms of rights; one woman mentioned that her employer obtained her entitlements under the "Foreign Workers" Law, which enables some women to work and gain limited rights (e.g., accessing health insurance, opening bank accounts, etc.).

Moreover, these women receive support from non-profit human rights organizations unaffiliated with the Israeli government. Afnan recounted that part of her volunteer work as an activist has been to organize family rights awareness days, sometimes with lawyers present, and to provide empowerment modules such as Hebrew language courses. Finally, technological advancements and the availability of digital spaces for constant communication – between women and their natal families when in Israel, and their nuclear families while "imprisoned" in the West Bank – play a role in overcoming the psychological hardships associated with being separated from one of their two families. Here, we refer to imprisonment in the sense that they are forced to stay in the West Bank and prohibited from entering the '48 or '67 regions if their permits have expired. It should also be noted that the women interviewed did not feel supported emotionally or legally by regional feminist frameworks.

41 An arranged marriage, according to which a sister and a brother swap-marry another set of a sister and a brother in two different marriage contracts based one a two-family agreement.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study has explored the experience of married Palestinian women from the Occupied Territories of 1967 living in the Triangle region inside the Green Line, finding that this category of women moves from one state of precarity largely resulting from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank into another state of precarity abounding in colonial practices against Palestinian society inside Israel. The study has shown how these women'sv arying degrees of precarity and relate to the type of permit they receive from Israel. Although those who were able to obtain identity cards valid for two years have managed to access some rights such as employment, health insurance, and family safety, they encounter major bureaucratic hardships every time they need to renew their residency. Those who carry only a family visit permit face more serious dangers and, according to Butler,[42] can be thought of as the "precariat" of society: they are vulnerable to a greater extent because they overstay their permits to carry on living with their families and have their children nearby. Hence, they enter a perpetual state of fear and are likely to face prosecution, deportation, and separation from their families, as has happened to several participants in the study.

The creation of these layers of precarity can be understood as a colonial policy designed to cause uncertainty and instability, to leave the colonized subjects weak and in constant anticipation of the worst-case scenario, or with the incessant desire to appease the authorities hoping to obtain the basic human right to live with one's family and children. We have also seen how each layer of precarity serves to reinforce power structures of gender, socioeconomic class, and so on.

The study has shown that part of women's precarity is their inability to bring their children with them to live in the West Bank in times of adversity – whether a family conflict, divorce, the loss of a spouse, or the denial of a permit or residency renewal request. Ineligible for Palestinian identification, their children cannot access services such as healthcare and education in the West Bank. As a result, women are compelled to endure social, political, psychological, and economic burdens against their will in order to remain in the country and avoid being uprooted from their homes and deported to the West Bank. Although Palestinian law gives women the right to grant Palestinian citizenship to their children, the Oslo Accords prevent them from doing so if the father is a man with Israeli citizenship.

In the Palestinian context, many feminists argue that the Oslo Accords played a major role in intensifying political and gendered violence against Palestinian women. Johnson and Kuttab hold that the Oslo Accords "created a climate of profound instability and forged a new image of Palestinian political activism which marginalized much of society and women in particular",[43] and that they are one of the intersecting factors that determine the structure of these women's precarity. Moreover, we have seen how economic status – support from husbands and (natal or spousal) families, number and age of children, and documentation type – shapes the daily lives of these women: support from a woman's natal family reduces the burden of alienation, having teenage or adult children sustains women emotionally and helps with daily errands, just as support from spouses is especially beneficial during the process of applying for residency or identity cards. Support from in-laws helps offset socioeconomic and psychological challenges, even when a woman has been deported to the West Bank; in such a case, her in-laws would take her children in until she comes back.

A previous study, Daher-Nashif illustrated the depth of the injustices, patriarchal social violence, as well as colonial oppression that married Palestinian women living in the Negev endure, all of which exacerbate their vulnerability, impose layers of precarity, alienation, and exclusion upon them, and leave them unable to protect themselves physically, psychologically, and socially. When we compare this research

42 Judith Butler, "Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics," *AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2009).

43 Penny Johnson & Eileen Kuttab, "Where have all the Women (and Men) Gone? Reflections on Gender and the Second Palestinian Intifada," *Feminist Review*, vol. 69, no. 1 (2001), pp. 21-24, 26.

with the present study, we find that women's precarity is greater in the Negev due to differences in economic situation relative to residents of the Triangle. Other reasons include widespread customs and traditions in the region (e.g., polygamy) as well as domestic violence, which is most prevalent in the Negev. This affirms that intersectionality is the most suitable conceptual framework for understanding and analysing such differences. The socioeconomic divergence between these two contexts can be explained in part by the discrimination Israel practices in dealing with Palestinians, based on a deliberate colonial policy aimed at creating fissures that spread throughout society. Hammami illustrates how Israel "operate[s] to distribute precarity unevenly" as part of a settler-colonial project "both across and within Palestinian space in the West Bank".[44] Comparing between the various backgrounds of married Palestinian women living within the Green Line demonstrates the veracity of this argument.

Here, it must be noted that the disparities are not limited to intentional segregation via colonial policies. Rather, there is also structural cultural variation within Palestinian society in Israel that, as demonstrated by Daher-Nashif[45] imposes an additional psychosocial burden on women. For instance, Abou-Tabickh highlights the fact that "Palestinians in Israel follow the rule of patrilocal marital residence according to which newlyweds join the husband's natal house", meaning that wives are the ones who must move to a new village or city with an unfamiliar culture.[46] She argues that these women's lived experiences of migration "in contrast to movements of population in much of the rest of the world […] brought about deterioration in their economic and social status", as social and institutional forces restrict their potential movement and, to varying degrees, cause their exclusion from familial, social, and economic spaces.[47] Amid a sense of alienation socially and high unemployment economically, these women are expected to acclimatize themselves to different customs and ways of life in the new town. Abou-Tabickh indicates that, despite their attempts to adapt and find their own place in the new environment, they remain strangers "among people […] who, for the most part, will never let [them] forget that" and perceive themselves as under constant social scrutiny.[48] This migration and its ramifications are invisible, or "masked". It is absent from both popular and academic Palestinian discourses in Israel.

An important outcome of this study is that when excessive Israeli barriers and requirements reach the point of humiliation and questioning parenthood, it negatively impacts women's status and emotional resolve. This can even harm their relationships with their spouses, who at times are driven to exhaustion and despair. Bureaucracy has long been a means by which the modern state subdues and controls its citizens, and its cruelty is amplified in the case of those seeking asylum or citizenship. For instance, Berda offers the term "security theology" to describe Israeli occupation policies that use such practices as a means to impose a bureaucratic system of "permits", leaving the lives of Palestinians "bare".[49] Giorgio Agamben put forth the concept of "bare life" in reference to those who, by law, are placed outside the law and under the absolute control of the state.[50] Although this study has depicted the bare lives of women and the ease with which they are subject to social and political harm as "illegal" residents of Israel, their situation is more vulnerable than Agamben's characterization because they lack citizenship or nationality that could offer them a degree of recourse when excluded by the law applicable to citizens.

---

44 Rema Hammami, "Precarious Politics: The Activism of 'Bodies that Count' (Aligning with those that don't) in Palestine's Colonial Frontier," in: Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti & Leticia Sabsay (eds.), *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 161.

45 Daher-Nashif.

46 Lilian Abou-Tabickh, "Women's Masked Migration," in: Rhoda Ann Kanaaneh & Isis Nusair (eds.), *Displaced at Home: Ethnicity and Gender among Palestinians in Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), p. 189.

47 Ibid., p. 204.

48 Ibid., p. 195.

49 Berda.

50 Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, Kevin Attell (trans.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Shalhoub-Kevorkian shows how the concept of security theology represents the cornerstone of Israeli bureaucratic engagement with Palestinians in Occupied Jerusalem and a primary means of enacting a system of control and domination over several aspects of their lives.[51] A major part of what excludes Palestinian women from the law and renders their lives bare before colonial occupation practices is the 2003 Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law, which was a nightmare for Palestinian families where one spouse is from the West Bank or Gaza. This study has illustrated the difference between the lives of women with identity cards or residency and those who hold only family visit permits, substantiating the fact that this law has had a prejudicial impact on women's lived experiences and must be suspended in both word and deed.

Among the study's most remarkable outcomes are the various coping and adaptation strategies that women use to carry on daily life in spite of the numerous hardships they face. These strategies confirm the claims made by Butler, inter alia, as to the interrelatedness of precarity and resistance: there can be no resistance without precarity, which in and of itself generates potentialities for resistance, or what is known as performativity. Precarity does not entail being unable to work, make sacrifices, or stand up for oneself; it does not mean being unable to perform.[52]

Many scholars have discussed the impact of Palestinian society's performativity on resisting colonial Israeli policies; for instance, Harker explores how family and community's support reduces the precarity and dangers that Palestinians face.[53] We have seen how family support, especially support of husbands, and the community's improve women's ability to confront and cope with an array of challenges. We conclude that these two forms of support are essential components of the colonial subject's capacity for survival, resistance, and salvation.

References

"Fīdiyū Muwāṭin Mustahdaf." Adalah Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. Accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://bit.ly/3ILr2YB

Adalah Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. *Qānūn al-Muwāṭana wa-l-Dukhūl ilā Isrāʾīl (amr muʾaqqat)*. Accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://bit.ly/3IN4gzJ

Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Kevin Attell (trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Akram, Susan M. "The Search for Protection for Stateless Refugees in the Middle East: Palestinians and Kurds in Lebanon and Jordan." *International Journal of Refugee Law*. vol. 30, no. 3 (2018).

Berda, Yael. *The Bureaucracy of the Occupation: An Introduction to the Permit Regime*. Unpublished manuscript, 2012.

Bishara, Azmi. "The Pitfalls of a US-Israeli Vision of a Palestine State." *Journal of Palestine Studies*. vol. 35, no. 2 (2006).

Brah, Avtar & Ann Phoenix. "Ain't I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality." *Journal of International Women's Studies*. vol. 5, no. 3 (2004).

Butler, Judith, Zeynep Gambetti & Leticia Sabsay (eds.). *Vulnerability in Resistance*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Butler, Judith. "Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics." *AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana*. vol. 4, no. 3 (2009).

51 Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

52 Butler, Gambetti & Sabsay.

53 Christopher Harker, "Geopolitics and Family in Palestine," *Geoforum*, vol. 42, no. 3 (2011), pp. 306 - 315.

Daher-Nashif, Suhad. "Vulnerability and Precarity of Palestinian Women in the Naqab." *Third World Quarterly*. vol. 43, no. 3 (2022).

Fineman, Martha Albertson (ed.). *The Public Nature of Private Violence: Women and the Discovery of Abuse*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Harker, Christopher. "Geopolitics and Family in Palestine." *Geoforum*. vol. 42, no. 3 (2011).

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy (ed.). *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012.

Jad, Islah. "Feminist Reading of the Palestinian Constitution Draft." *Review of Women's Studies*. no. 2 (2003).

Jaraisey, Barhoum. "Qānūn al-Muwāṭana wa-l-Dukhūl ilā Isrāʾīl (amr sāʿa – qānūn ṭawāriʾ) 2022." *Special Report*. Madar: The Palestinian Centre for Israeli Studies. 13/3/2022. Accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://did.li/HBM5q

Jefferis, Danielle C. "Institutionalizing Statelessness: The Revocation of Residency Rights of Palestinians in East Jerusalem." *International Journal of Refugee Law*. vol. 24, no. 2 (2012).

Johnson, Penny & Eileen Kuttab. "Where have all the Women (and Men) Gone? Reflections on Gender and the Second Palestinian Intifada." *Feminist Review.* vol. 69, no. 1 (2001).

Joronen, Mikko & Mitch Rose. "Vulnerability and its Politics: Precarity and the Woundedness of Power." *Progress in Human Geography*. vol. 45, no. 6 (2021).

Kanaaneh, Rhoda Ann & Isis Nusair (eds.). *Displaced at Home: Ethnicity and Gender among Palestinians in Israel*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.

Molavi, Shourideh C. *Stateless Citizenship: The Palestinian-Arab Citizens of Israel*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Phoenix, Ann & Pamela Pattynama. "Intersectionality." *European Journal of Women's Studies.* vol. 13, no. 3 (2006).

Preser, Ruth. *Bare Lives: Women without Status in Haifa and the North of Israel*. Haifa: Isha L'Isha Feminist Institute, 2020 [Hebrew].

Priddy, Grace et al. "Gender-Based Violence in a Complex Humanitarian Context: Unpacking the Human Sufferings Among Stateless Rohingya Women." *Ethnicities*. vol. 22, no. 2 (2022).

Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Nadera. *Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Shiblak, Abbas. "Stateless Palestinians." *Forced Migration Review*. no. 26 (2006).

Stein, Yael. "Forbidden Families: Family Unification and Child Registration in East Jerusalem." B'tselem; Center for the Defence of the Individual. 2004.

United Nations. *Human Rights Instruments: Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*. Accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://bit.ly/3XUn4RV

United Nations. *Human Rights Instruments: Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*. Accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://bit.ly/3XVtC2x

United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Accessed on 20/2/2023, at: https://did.li/FZZfT

Veikou, Mariangela. "Back to Basics: Stateless Women and Children in Greece." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*. vol. 19, no. 5 (2017).