



Economic rights of Jerusalemite women...

draining reality and grave violations

Date posted: May 25, 2022



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Introduction:

Jerusalemite women and girls face specific economic challenges that render their ability to participate in the Palestinian economic development process nearly impossible. They also make their simple life a nightmarish series of difficulties, especially in the absence of international monitoring parties and ongoing Israeli occupation violations and attacks. Jerusalemite women live a concerning economic reality that is reflected on all aspects of their lives, drains their potentials and undermines their aspirations.

This paper reflects the most prominent outcomes of a research developed by the “Abad Al Shams” Institute in conjunction with MIFTAH on the economic reality of Palestinian women in Israeli-occupied Jerusalem. The research documented violations and analyzed the impacts of these violations vis-à-vis hindering Jerusalemite women’s contributions to promoting sustainable development for the Palestinian economy on par with other Palestinian women.

Statistics and indicators on the fragile economic condition of women and girls in Jerusalem:

- A drop in the percentage of women’s participation in the workforce in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, at **16%**.
- Unemployment rate among women stood at **40%** while it was **69%** among young women with diplomas or higher degrees.
- Females in Jerusalem suffer from a high level of education against salary gaps. The rate of their participation in the workforce, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics was **10.5%** in 2020, which is low and resulting from **89.5%** who left it.
- The rate of Palestinian women who participate in the workforce in Jerusalem, according to Israeli sources, was **23%** as opposed to **81%** of Jewish women, in 2019.
- The number of female merchants registered with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Jerusalem in 2020/2021 was around **90 women only** out of 1,220 merchants.
- The participation of Jerusalemite women in the workforce (15 years or more) in 2020 was **35.9%**, which is lower than their Palestinian counterparts elsewhere.
- Jerusalemite society is young, whereby **64%** of the population is below 30.
- Israel deals with Jerusalemites as "**residents and not citizens**".
- The percentage of Jerusalemite families who are residents of the (J1) area and who live under the poverty line is approximately **four times** as many as Israeli families.

Israeli measures distort and destroy the economic reality of women

First: discrimination because of the Palestinian ID

Israel imposes many measures to pressure Jerusalemite women in order to alter their Palestinian identity to meld with Israeli society, including imposing Hebrew, whereby job opportunities and official documents, economic, financial and bank transactions are all in Hebrew.

Discrimination in employment and securing a suitable job: the percentage of Jerusalemite women between the ages of 25 and 64 and who are part of the labor force in Jerusalem is **only 22%**, while high quality jobs are confined to West Jerusalem institutions. Jerusalemites suffer from racial discrimination within Israeli institutions and companies.

Second: Economic burdens linked to housing, the racist, separation wall and the siege imposed on the city

Israeli taxes adversely and clearly affect housing and women's ability to secure housing. The average price of a 100 square-meter apartment in East Jerusalem ranges **between \$400,000 and \$800,000**, while rent for a flat of the same size costs around \$800 to \$1500 or more.

Women lost a large part of their properties, lands and natural wealth to Israeli confiscation when it occupied around 26,300 dunams of land for Israeli settlement construction. Hence, they lost their natural right to transfer this wealth or benefit from it.

- Palestinians are only allowed construction on **13%** of the land in East Jerusalem and are only granted **7%** of building permits.
- Families who are forced to build their homes without a license are made to pay high fines and later to demolish their homes...any wealth women saved to secure their home is lost and they drown in debt and fines.
- The demolition policy strips women of their homes and puts their children out in the streets, yet another push towards poverty.
- **39%** of houses built without a permit in East Jerusalem have received demolition orders. Women are forced to endure hefty financial burdens pertaining to residency and family reunification expenses.

Third: Women entrepreneurs...shocking challenges

Women entrepreneurs in the city suffer from several challenges including: lack of expertise, the absence of the necessary competitive skills, the absence of specialization according to development needs, the lack of appropriate capital for the development and management of projects and marketing and the incessant tracking of occupation authorities.

Mrs. Ola Boujih says: I suffered from cancer for over 16 years and the painkillers kept me from my family. I saw it crumbling in front of me...so I decided to pull myself together and start my project. I created "Istabrak" but Israeli occupation authorities confiscated my merchandise four times during raids on exhibits in which I was participating.

Even though the Israeli National Insurance categorized me as disabled, the Israeli municipality froze my assets, citing high property tax (Arnona) dues. In the winter, my house leaks and there is always the danger of an electrical short circuit. My family has debts of over ILS200,000 and I hoped that my project would improve our economic conditions but Israeli measures have made that impossible.

Outcomes of the study:

The factsheet focused on a study sample of low-income individuals within poverty line perimeters in Israel (ILS2,811 per/individual and ILS10,542 per a two-parent, three children household). The percentage of women who hail from rural areas of the city was **23.2%**, of which **71.4%** were subjected to violations of their rights as rural women and girls.

- **43.4%** of the sample has an income ranging between ILS3000-ILS5000 and **37.1%** was below ILS3000.
- The spending rate for **40.3%** of the sample was between ILS3000-5000, while 37% spent between ILS5000- 7000. Furthermore, 59.7% of the sample does not receive appropriate social security services.
- **76.3%** do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as Israeli women, which means Jerusalemite workers are discriminated against because of their national identity.
- The most striking cases of discrimination against women pertained to work conditions: **18.8%** cited working hours; 10.4% the type and nature of the work; **29.2%** said discrimination in treatment; and 14.6% cited discrimination in wages.
- **70.0%** of the sample were subjected to violence.
- **35.2%** of the sample do not have a written contract.
- For **46.7%**, the contract was in Hebrew.
- **70.6%** of the sample never receive bonuses or promotions.
- **46.9%** do not have maternal and childcare rights.
- **60.8%** of women and girls cross Israeli checkpoints every day to get to work.
- **55.8%** of the sample believe the internal atmosphere of their workplace is unsafe.
- **13.6%** of the sample recently had their properties confiscated.
- **30.5%** had their homes demolished or have received demolition orders.
- **44.1%** of Jerusalemites do not have the right to choose their residence.

• Economic rights and international treaties

International treaties guaranteed the economic rights of Jerusalemite women as basic rights, confirming the right of self-determination for peoples. By virtue of this right, people are free to seek achievement of their economic growth and to freely utilize their wealth and natural resources. Under no circumstance should any people be deprived of their specific reasons for life.

The question remains: is Israel committed to promoting the economic reality of Jerusalemite women in accordance with international agreements?

- Israel has blatantly violated all of the economic rights of Jerusalemite women and girls through exercising racial discrimination.
- In its reports to international committees, Israel completely ignores the harsh economic reality of Jerusalemite women.
- Palestinian women are subjected to violence, discrimination and exclusion and their economic reality is threatened with collapse from every aspect.
- Israel has infringed on Jerusalemite women's right to self-determination and isolated them from their natural economic surroundings, which is the Palestinian economy, by isolating the city and imposing an economic blockade on it.
- Jerusalemite women have been deprived of their right to freely utilize their wealth and natural resources through the confiscation of their land and properties and control over tourist sites and water resources, which has had a direct impact on the economic reality of rural women.

*The content of this document does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union.
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