



The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy

MIFTAH

2019 Annual Report

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1. Situation Analysis

During 2019, significant political, economic, legal and social developments took place on both the international and national stage. Internationally, and since 2017, the Trump Administration has clashed politically with the Palestinians, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, relocating the U.S. embassy there, reducing bilateral aid to the West Bank and Gaza, discontinued contributions to UNRWA for Palestinian refugees, closed the PLO's representative office in Washington, DC, and subsumed the U.S. consulate general in Jerusalem within the U.S. embassy to Israel. In 2019, the USA has further supported Israel declaring that it no longer considers Israeli settlements in the occupied Golan Heights, West Bank and East Jerusalem a violation of international law.

In response to the USA's declaration, the EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini issued a statement that reiterated that the union's position "remains unchanged: all settlement activity is illegal under international law and it erodes the viability of the two-state solution and the prospects for a lasting peace." However, an effort to get all 28 European Union member states to issue a joint statement condemning the US decision was blocked by Hungary.

Additionally, the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor announced there was evidence that war crimes had been committed and that an investigation can be opened, pending a decision on legal jurisdiction. Palestinian officials welcomed the announcement as a step towards justice while the Israeli government condemned it, smearing the ICC as anti-Semitic.

In August, Israel prevented Democratic Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar from entering the occupied West Bank as part of a visiting delegation. Omar and Tlaib are the first Muslim women elected to Congress, and Tlaib the first Palestinian-American woman. Israel has barred members of Congress from entering occupied Gaza before, but Tlaib and Omar's case is believed to be the first time that Israel has completely denied entry to members of the US Congress and reflects the widening gap between Israel, which continues to move rightward, and Democratic voters and lawmakers.

Weekly 'Great March of Return' demonstrations at the Gaza perimeter fence were suspended in late December but are due to restart in April 2020. The "Great March of Return", which commenced on 30 March 2018, were widely seen as a peaceful demonstration seeking to uplift the siege of Gaza, which has been in effect since Israel's unilateral disengagement in 2005, coupled with the effectuation of the right of Palestinian refugees to their homeland, given that 70% of the population of Gaza consists of refugees. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, around 7,000 protestors have been wounded, with the death toll exceeding 250 citizens, including medics, children, and journalists.

On a national level, President Abbas announced in the United Nations General Assembly that National Elections will be held which carries more weight than former announcements. While the process continues, it cannot be said with certainty that PLC and Presidential elections will, in fact take place. In October, Abbas commissioned the President of the Central Elections Committee (CEC) to begin preparations, and by late November, all Palestinian factions - including Hamas - had given their approval for elections to take place. The PA asked Israel on 10th December to allow East Jerusalem residents to vote and run in the parliamentary and presidential elections, as was the case in 1996, 2005 and 2006. Israeli officials are still to provide an answer which could be provided until after the Israeli elections on 2 March 2020.

The Palestinian government, which was formed and announced in April 2019 under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, adopted measures to support the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and decrease reliance on the Israeli economy, namely, pursuing economic development through clustering approach, by classifying each governorate according to its strength. The new formed government, in addition to the political challenges, faces a number of internal issues namely on the economic and social level. According to PCBS survey on public perception of the national priorities within the SDG's Agenda (2019) corruption remains a main concern for the public, where 94% stated that the top obstacle facing the realizations of the SDGs in the West Bank was corruption. Another main challenge is the high unemployment rate, according to the PCBS, the unemployment rate in Gaza Strip was 45% compared with 13% in the West Bank, while the unemployment rate for males was 20% compared with 42% for females. Additionally, unemployment among youth was 45% (36% among males and 70% among females).

The PA's financial crisis that continued for almost six months and was considered a measure of collective punishment against the Palestinian people, has been alleviated for the time being with the PA resuming acceptance of reduced clearance revenues that began in February 2019. The impasse between Israel and the PA on clearance revenues seems to have been overcome when the PA accepted payment of the remainder of 2019 clearance revenues less the ILS 42m monthly deduction of the prisoner payment portion. The PA received in August and October funds owed for the entirety of 2019 minus the amounts Israel unilaterally withdrew. Thus, according to reporting by the Palestine Monetary Authority and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, during the fourth quarter of 2019, GDP increased, with growth of 3.6% compared to the third quarter of 2019. The financial crisis sought to destabilize the PA, given that clearance revenues constitute more than 70% of public budget revenues. This measure has pushed the PA to operate under an emergency budget, which serves as an obstacle to the Palestinian civil society to monitor budget allocations and concert efforts to impact Palestinian social policy.

Combating gender based violence remained a priority for Palestinian women and human rights organizations in 2019. This comes in light of the lack of progress in the harmonization

of Palestinian legislation namely the Family Protection Bill, the Personal Status Law and Penal Code with CEDAW and other human rights conventions. This priority was further highlighted after death of Israa Ghrayeb, a 21 year old woman from Bethlehem area, who died after being hospitalized with severe wounds caused by her male relatives. Israa's death sparked an outcry in Palestine and the Arab region, leading to widespread calls for justice and protection for women. Additionally, the preliminary findings of a survey carried out by the PCBS in 2019, reveal that 29% of women in Palestine have reported psychological, physical, sexual, social or economic violence by their husbands at least once during the preceding 12 months.

2. Introduction

MIFTAH Vision: A sovereign, independent, democratic, tolerant and inclusive Palestinian state, which grants Palestinians their basic rights, preserves their dignity, and enjoys international recognition and respect.

MIFTAH Mission: Established in 1998, MIFTAH seeks to promote the principles of democracy and good governance within various components of Palestinian society; it further seeks to engage local and international public opinion and official circles on the Palestinian cause. To that end, MIFTAH adopts the mechanisms of an active and in-depth dialogue, the free flow of information and ideas, as well as local and international networking.

MIFTAH's strategic objectives

1. To Enhance Good Governance in Palestine

- ❖ Specific Objective 1: To advance policy advocacy and lobbying to ensure social justice and equality;
- ❖ Specific Objective 2: To enhance women and youth participation in policy and decision-making within the public sector and local government organizations;

2. To Strengthen National Unity and International Awareness of the Palestinian Narrative

- ❖ Specific Objective 1: To enhance internal dialogue to reach consensus on key political positions imperative to the Palestinians;
- ❖ Specific Objective 2: To promote the Palestinian narrative as a just and fair cause;

In line with the above strategic objectives, MIFTAH works on the following thematic areas:

- Women Political Participation
- Youth Empowerment
- Women Peace and Security

- Women Protection from GBV
- Women Economic Empowerment
- Fiscal Justice
- Promotion of Human Rights
- Palestinian Narrative
- Political Dialogue

MIFTAH was able to achieve the following results during 2019

3. Results by Objective

I. To Enhance Good Governance in Palestine

1.1 Enhancing Women and Youth Participation in Decision Making and within the Political System

1.1.1 Demands for Amendments to the Electoral System to Promote Women and Youth Participation

As part of MIFTAH's efforts in advancing policy advocacy and lobbying to ensure higher representation of women and youth in any upcoming national elections, MIFTAH hosted a dialogue session that included a group of organizations working and following up on the issue of elections. The session emphasized that if amendments to Elections Law No. 1 of 2007 were opened, there is a necessity of including amendments related to raising the quota percentage to at least 30% and lowering the candidacy age. This would support greater representation of women and youth in the electoral lists. A letter in this regard was drafted, in cooperation with the "Arab World Democracy and Electoral Monitor" (Al Marsad), directed to the President's Office.

Additionally, and in relation to the Local Election Law, MIFTAH, in partnership with a number of human rights and feminist organizations, demanded the Prime Minister to include amendments and reforms to the Local Council Elections Law number (10) of 2005. This came in line with the new government's intentions to emphasize the principles of equity and justice for Palestinian women and to include the empowerment of Palestinian youth as a priority within the policies of the 18th Government. The demands are based on the provisions of the Palestinian Basic Law and Declaration of Independence, in addition to the recommendations issued by the Palestinian Central Council on the importance of equality and fair representation of women in various institutions by at least 30%. The demands are also in line with the ratification of Palestine of a number of international conventions and treaties, notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) without reservation, and are in keeping with the State of Palestine's obligations before the CEDAW Committee on the

importance of introducing amendments and reforms to promote women's political participation on the basis of equality. The demands were as follows:

First: To uphold the principle of full equality of women's representation in candidacy, and at least a 30% quota as a temporary measure to achieve full equality during periodic electoral cycles.

Second: Maintain the system of proportional representation in the elections of local bodies with a reduction of the threshold to 5% in the Local Councils Elections Law.

Third: Remove the restrictions on the candidacy age to enhance the access of young groups to local councils, so that the person who has the right to vote is allowed to run, in line with the trends of the majority of the world in this regard.

1.1.2 Continued efforts to reactivate the General Union of Palestine Students

During 2019, MIFTAH continued to foster dialogue on ways to reactivate the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) with representatives from Palestinian factions and parties within the PLO, the Popular Mobilization Department, the GUPS Executive Committee, and the student union councils. The dialogue aims at supporting youth in pressing the relevant parties to ensure the political representation of youth within the PLO's relevant authorities and to reactivate GUPS which is considered one of the most important national platforms for youth within the PLO. The dialogue sessions concluded the following:

- 1) The signed commitment of the parties and factions to set the stage for holding the General Conference during the first half of 2020 and to overcome any obstacles preventing its convention: namely, allocating the budget required by the PLO, and agreeing on the venue of the conference.
- 2) The message of the parties to the popular federations and the executive body of the general union, which includes stressing the need to maintain political representation, representation of universities in a balanced way, and requesting the PLO and the executive body of GUPS to set the date of the conference.
- 3) Forming a committee composed of political parties to assume responsibility for following up on the arrangements for holding the general conference.
- 4) The approval of addressed amendments to the GUPS internal bylaws which guaranteed the Palestinian youth ownership of the GUPS and a proportional system for the representation of Students' Councils inside Palestine and Diaspora.

1.1.3 The Political and Social Active Youth Network formulate their Plan for 2020 -2022

As part of its "Youth Empowerment" Program, MIFTAH worked on expanding the interaction and activism of its Youth Network with the recruitment of 20 new members. The Network members (old and new members) worked through a six-day interactive workshop on social transformation aimed at promoting youth participation in the Palestinian political system and

providing them with the necessary skills and tools for understanding the Palestinian sociopolitical sphere. The workshop also aimed at enhancing the youth capabilities in developing joint actions to advocate for their youth political agenda with decision makers and duty bearers and to empower their role in regaining their representation within the different structures of the political system with special focus on the General Union of Palestinian Students within the PLO. Additionally, strategic directions were identified and further developed including suggested actions and priorities for the Youth Network for 2020-2022.

1.1.4 Awareness Raising on Political Participation, Civic Engagement and Elections

MIFTAH as part of its strategic direction to enhance citizens' and public awareness about principles of democracy and good governance including the concept of civic engagement, active citizenship through participation, the importance of women and youth political participation and the principle of peaceful transfer of power through the ballot box, continues to mobilize public opinion and awareness. During 2019, MIFTAH successfully conducted 60 outreach town hall meetings with the participation of more than 3,000 citizens the majority of which are women in the different governorates of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The town hall meetings aim to raise Palestinian public awareness regarding the exercise of democracy and to promote the principle of active citizenship through freedom of opinion, the right to choose and run in elections. The participants were also exposed to civic engagement and elections related issues based on the informative material that was prepared by MIFTAH; electoral system in Palestine, elections laws and legislations, and the reform policy recommendations to enhance gender equality in elections legal and procedures framework to supporting women and youth participation in elections as voters and candidates through democratic means for achieving social change.

1.1.5 Supporting the Commitment of Local Government Units to the Provisions of the Gender Charter in Local Councils

In line with MIFTAH's strategic directions that seek to promote the participation of women and youth in policy formulation and decision-making positions in both public and local sectors, and institutionalize the integration of gender issues in local government policies, MIFTAH worked on updating and developing the Gender Charter, which was adopted by the Ministry of Local Governance in 2009-2010. The development came with the view of increasing the Charter's responsiveness towards the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, and ensure that it is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Additionally, a manual of procedures and regulations to facilitate the implementation of the Charter within the work of local councils was developed in coordination and cooperation with the gender and the performance and evaluation units at the MoLG and in partnership with the NGOs Gender Forum in Local Governance.

With the view of improving the role of civil society organizations that are members of the Forum to ensure holding local councils accountable to adhere to the Charter, MIFTAH developed a manual of monitoring and evaluation indicators on the performance of local councils on the implementation of the Gender Charter and the identification of stakeholders towards assessing the compliance of local councils with the provisions of the Charter, and clarifying the procedures for assessing the commitment to implement the provisions of the Charter along six main dimensions: governance, management and environmental regulation, planning and development, accountability, transparency, and services. The manual was considered as a means to support the NGOs working in the field, such that it provided a set of standard criteria in the process of assessing and monitoring the commitment of local councils in implementing the Gender Charter and facilitating the process of measuring results. This serves to collect the data needed for the forum's organizations to facilitate necessary intervention.

1.1.6 Development of a Grassroots Based Gender Strategy for Increasing Participation of Women in National Reconciliation and Decision-Making and the launch of the "Shufuna" platform

Within MIFTAH's efforts to press for the integration and involvement of women and youth in dialogue circles and national decision-making to influence the formulation of public policies, MIFTAH launched the "Shufuna" platform, which includes more than 250 participants representing all social sectors including political parties, athletes / artists, journalists, activists within social media platforms (socialists), young men and women, and representatives of civil society organizations.

MIFTAH managed to formulate strategic directions that support the representation and participation of women in the national dialogue to end the division and achieve national reconciliation. It then framed them in a strategic plan that includes the directions and goals resulting from consultations and workshops with participants from all West Bank governorates, including Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The Plan stresses on the need to end the division and political polarization, and seek national reconciliation.

1.1.7 Advocating Towards Democratic Constitutional Principles in Palestine

MIFTAH during 2019 opened dialogue on constitutional principles in order to strengthen the democratic approach, alongside emphasizing the importance of debate and discussion on the values and principles of democracy and ways to achieve them. MIFTAH focused on emphasizing the constitutional culture by raising awareness on constitutional principles such as equality, pluralism, democracy, participation, social justice and the role of civil society in instilling principles of democracy. The constitutional culture will then create a popular readiness to review and address the constitution up until the drafting and referendum stage of constitutional development.

The dialogue emphasized the importance of transparency in the release of the constitution, the need to define the features and characteristics of the polity through the constitution, ensure that the constitutional principles are based on the Declaration of Independence, as well as on the role of the media and the need to ensure national ownership of the constitution and women's representation in the constitutional in the technical committees, the alignment of the constitution with international conventions, respect for the rights and protection of religious and marginalized minorities, the indivisibility of human rights, the creation of a constitutional culture, and the need for coordination between different viewpoints, in addition to benefiting from the Arab and international experiences on this level.

1.2 Advocating for the realization of the Palestinian Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda at the National and International¹ Level

1.2.1 Providing a vision for reconstruction from a Palestinian women's perspective

Within MIFTAH's efforts to promote women's role in decision making, strengthening the social fabric and achieving national reconciliation in addition to integrating women in following up on the reconstruction file through hearing and dialogue sessions with decision makers, a discussion of a concept paper entitled "Reconstruction from a women's perspective" took place. MIFTAH seeks through this paper to highlight the lack of women's participation in the reconstruction plans since the beginning and with the various parties following up on the file. The paper also highlights the outstanding and problematic issues in dealing with this file in terms of the lack of real data, which indicates lack of integrity and transparency in managing this file.

1.2.2 Opening Dialogue on Gaps within the Policies and Procedures Applied by Sharia and Ecclesiastical Courts

As part of coordination and cooperation with the Civil Society "Personal Status Law Coalition" in efforts to amend and reform the Personal Status Law, policies and procedures applied by Sharia and Ecclesiastical courts based on the principle of equality in CEDAW, MIFTAH opened dialogue and conducted a session on the results of a special report, prepared by MIFTAH, on the measures and policies of Sharia and Ecclesiastical courts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The session concluded with the following recommendations:

- The need to develop legislation on issues of separation due to conflict and discord and to create a unified Palestinian legal framework to be applied in all parts of the homeland based on the principle of equality in the Palestinian Basic Law and the system of international agreements, first and foremost CEDAW.

¹ For more details on International Advocacy efforts, please see section 2.2

- A review of procedures for ending a marriage based on the principle of preserving the family as much as possible; such procedures need adjustment by giving at least a month to the couple before making the decision to terminate their marriage; also to take measures regarding the criteria for choosing arbitrators and determining the venue for holding their sessions in addition to means used for verifying the information provided by the couple.
- To put efforts towards establishing family counseling departments and increasing its employees and formulating a series of capacity-building interventions for them
- The need for the regulation of procedures regarding medical reports as a means of verifying damage or harm given that sometimes these reports are not sufficient. The national referral system should also be reaffirmed.
- To consider and adequately provide legal aid; set up a fund for financial aid for women to file conflict and discord lawsuits due to the rise in procedural fees, which hinders women's access to justice.
- Obligatory legal reform that guarantees application and implementation and an increase in the number of judges and employees in the Sharia courts units and departments, in addition to procedures aimed at eradicating legal illiteracy in Palestinian society.

1.3 Enhancing Women Protection from GBV

1.3.1 Rapid Assessment of the National Referral System: Implementation, Challenges and Gaps

As part of MIFTAH's strategic approach to promote social dialogue on the legislative climate and its impact on public policies which protect citizens' rights, with a focus on the institution's contributions to civil society efforts to combat violence against women in Palestinian society, MIFTAH conducted a rapid assessment for the implementation of the NRS for battered women. The assessment has shed the light on the main challenges facing the implementation of the NRS and the challenges and gaps in the system, which impact its execution and hinder women's access to protective services. As a follow up process, findings of the study were shared in a round table discussion with key government and civil society actors and policy recommendations were formulated to enhancing the implementation of the NRS and presented in a position paper submitted to the Cabinet.

MIFTAH extended its researching in ***identifying gaps within the NRS based on assessing the needs for women with disabilities victims of GBV*** and the challenges they face to access protection services within the system. The main findings of the needs assessment were presented in a **fact sheet with clear indication of the gaps within the NRS in regard to battered women with disabilities** followed with a list of specific recommendations to enhance the responsiveness of the system to the needs of women and girl with disabilities.

1.3.2 Hearing Session on the Obstacles to Adopting the Family Protection Bill

MIFTAH held a hearing session to highlight the obstacles facing the adoption of the Family Protection Bill. The session; hosted speakers from the Ministry of Justice, President's Office,

the General Union of Palestinian Women and the NGO Forum to Combat Violence against Women. The session was successful in revealing and providing updates on the status and standing of the Family Protection Bill. The speakers from the official sector confirmed that the Bill was reviewed by the legal advisor at the President's office and returned to a newly formulated specialized technical committee to officially review the Bill. This technical committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Development and other governmental bodies headed by the Fatwa and Legislation Bureau.

Meanwhile representatives of civil society confirmed that the demand for the adoption of the law is not a matter of luxury, nor of the application of international conventions, as much as it is a response to the urgent need of our society where the manifestations of violence includes all members of society including persons with disabilities. They also added, that working with the government as the General Union for Palestinian Women and as an NGO Forum that includes numerous civil society organizations working on women's issues in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, came to accelerate the adoption of this law, which led to the development of suggestions submitted to various committees, based on reflection and consensus among the various components of the feminist movement.

1.4 Enhancing Fiscal Transparency and Social Justice

1.4.1 Monitoring the actual spending rates on the social sector

As part of MIFTAH's work in monitoring and tracking actual spending on the social sector, which includes spending on education, health and social development programs, reports indicated that as of November 2019, spending was as follows: The Ministry of Education: 19.5% of the total public spending for 2019, followed by the Health Ministry at 11%, and finally the Ministry of Social Development at 7.1% of the total public actual spending.

1.4.2 MIFTAH showcases factsheet on progressive tax and tax burden from a gender perspective

MIFTAH, along with the Civil Society Team on Public Budget Transparency (CSTPBT), held a session to showcase and discuss a factsheet aimed at following up and updating data on the fair tax monitor chapter on progressive tax and tax burden.

The data in the factsheet indicated that direct taxes dropped in 2018 by 5.2% because of the drop in the income tax transferred by Israel by 61%. This is in spite of a rise in local income tax by 7.4% because of the success of government policies in decreasing the tax rate and broadening the tax base. In the past three years, there have been consecutive rises in these revenues. However, the income tax rate for companies from the total tax revenues was very slim, at 3.6% in 2016, with a slight rise in 2017 and 2018, reaching to 4.6% and 5.4% respectively. The factsheet concluded that the presidential decree for the enacted tax law did not contribute to achieving the principle of progressivity, showing that property taxes are still very low, at around 1% of the total tax revenues. It should be noted that the majority of assets

and properties are registered in the names of men because of the lack of any obligation to register property in women's names. This requires a review of all women's rights, especially the right to own property.

1.4.3 'Right to Health' campaign launched

In line with national efforts to support and promote the stability of Palestinians on their land through improving health services, a coalition of Palestinian civil society organizations (MIFTAH, ARIJ, AMAN) launched a campaign entitled, "Right to Health (R2H)". The R2H campaign seeks to increase the budget allocations of the Ministry of Health to reinsure the right of all citizens to health care in accordance with international human rights treaties and conventions. The organizers of the campaign call on citizens to join the campaign and sign the petition to support their efforts:

<http://www.right2health.ps>

<https://www.facebook.com/r2hpal>

1.4.4 Providing Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of the Tax System to Promote Values of Social Justice in Fiscal Policies

MIFTAH extended its research analytical work based on the launched 2018 Fair Tax Monitor report, aimed at providing the public and civil society institutions with qualitative and quantitative analysis and an overall view of the Palestinian tax system. MIFTAH continues to put the pressure in order to adopt more in-depth thinking and develop effective strategies to confront challenges through pro-poor fiscal policies that are more responsive to the people's needs; this is by considering the causes and factors that would enable Palestinian citizens to remain steadfast. In addition to take into consideration the socioeconomic circumstances under which members of Palestinian society live and transform these challenges into opportunities to promote concerted efforts in expanding the circle of dialogue between official institutions and the relevant parties to looking for solutions and reform recommendations that advance socio-economic policies.

The FTM report's results concluded with recommendations to:

- Restructure tax policies and focus on direct income tax revenues as the 'wealth tax' instead of depending on indirect (consumption) taxes.
- It focused on the importance of adopting a progressive fiscal policy through increasing the number of tax brackets to raise the level of social equity.
- The socioeconomic goals of tax policies such as education, health and social protection must also be taken into consideration by the government social policies.

1.4.5 Providing Evidences on Tax Exemption for Advocacy Purposes

In line with MIFTAH's strategic directions to advance policy advocacy and lobbying to ensure social justice and equality, MIFTAH prepared a research study on the Tax Exemption for corporates in Palestine. The study focused on Palestinian investment promotion law no. 1,

2008, in order to address the gaps within the law. In addition MIFTAH is seeking to gather information and figures on the volume of tax exemption and its impact in Palestine to use it for advocacy purposes at a later stage.

The study found that there is no direct link between the investment promotion (Tax Exemptions) and the increase in the GDP; however a small number of national corporates benefited from the law. Based on the study recommendation, MIFTAH will expand the dialogue with related parties in order to prioritize the national investment in the human capital instead of spending the taxpayer money on supporting big corporates who are eligible to benefit from the law.

This will lead the government to redesign the allocated public budget to enhance the quality of services which are provided through the public health sector and reforming the national health insurance system.

1.4.6 Supporting the MOSD in Drafting its 2020-2022 Budget

Building on the cooperation between MIFTAH and the Ministry of Social Development, MIFTAH supported the ministry in reviewing objectives and outputs of the ministry's strategic plan as part of the preparation of the ministry's 2020-2022 draft budget that provides ministry services according to a rights based approach that guarantees services to the elderly and to persons with disabilities. This support comes as a response to the ministry's keenness to prepare a realistic and accurate budget that takes the current context into consideration and the difficult circumstances surrounding the Palestinian cause. Additionally, the aim is for the budget to be relatable to citizens and to their benefit according to the policies of the 18th government, which seeks to provide services that positively impact citizens. Thus, the new budget would address the various services and programs in a realistic manner, first and foremost the cash transfer program. Other priority issues would also be addressed such as the "Thuraya Center" for persons with severe disabilities.

1.5 Contribute to Supporting Women's Economic Participation

1.5.1 Practical proposals and recommendations that contribute to improving the response of the vocational and technical training sector to the needs of youth and women

MIFTAH presented practical proposals and recommendations to improve the response of the vocational and technical training sector to the needs of youth and women, which were discussed with representatives from youth and civil society institutions and a number of ministers in a hearing session. The recommendations were formulated based on figures and data from official parties, highlighting the most significant gaps in this sector. These include the shortage of vocational and technical institutions in most districts and the absence of legislation for advancing vocational and technical training in Palestine. This is compounded by the

absence of fiscal policies for the allocation of specific government budgets, whereby part of each ministry's general budget is earmarked for this sector instead.

According to the figures presented, the number of male and female graduates for 2018/2019 was 1,610; 83.7% of these graduates were male while female graduates did not exceed 16.3%. MIFTAH presented these data and recommendations to the Prime Minister's Office as contribution to official efforts in developing plans and strategic directions to support the development of this sector and the empowerment of women and youth.

1.5.2 MIFTAH continues to economically empower women to help them break the cycle of violence

MIFTAH targeted 54 women in the Jenin and Hebron regions, who are in safe spaces supported by centers specialized in the field of support for women victims of violence and where MIFTAH assessed the reality of these women and monitored their economic and social needs. The results of the needs assessment concluded the need to intervene in the empowerment of targeted women and their economic support to contribute in improving their economic and social conditions. In return, this contributes in supporting them break free from the cycle of violence and dependence on the other. Women were supported by grants for productive, crafts and career-oriented projects. The grants also included registering some women in centers and institutes to receive the necessary technical and vocational training based on their needs. Many of these women went on to receive education and training in non-traditional professions, including photography and thermal printing on clothes.

Prior to that, and in support of reducing vulnerability of GBV survivors through vocational and life skills activities, and promoting resilience, MIFTAH conducted a series of training workshops over a period of 8 days in Jenin & Hebron districts. These trainings targeted 63 women victims or at risk of GBV and provided them with life skills and tools on how to face the difficult circumstances they are suffering from and available means of protection. Additionally, the training built their skills in project management and the use of social media as a marketing tool so that they can manage their own income generating projects.

1.5.3 Organizing the Ramadan Bazaar

Based on the strategy of MIFTAH to support and promote women's active and pioneer roles and raise their level of participation within the family and society, coupled with the importance of the impact of providing economic support for Palestinian women and young women especially those steadfast in marginalized areas, MIFTAH and the Business Women Forum organized the Ramadan Bazaar. The two day period bazaar included products and handcrafts, accessories, sweets, fashion, soap, ceramics, paintings, decorations, antiques, gifts and Ramadan pastries and drinks from 60 projects across the West Bank. MIFTAH, which has been working for the past 11 years on women economic empowerment, was able to reach more than 300 Palestinian women through small income-generating projects. These projects

have contributed to positive change and impact on women's reality by empowering them and improving their social and economic realities. The targeted women also achieved successes that contributed to the development of models for women with dependents in marginalized areas suffering from poverty and isolation and continuous violations by the occupation's policies and practices of land confiscation, house demolitions, settlement expansion, arrests and restrictions on citizens and repeated closures.

1.6 MIFTAH's Capacity Building Activities in 2019

MIFTAH, and within its first strategic objective, aims at “enhancing women and youth participation in policy and decision-making within the public sector and local government organizations”. One of the methods that MIFTAH follows is capacity building. During 2019, a number of capacity building interventions were implemented as follows:

1.6.1 Capacity Building of Potential Women Candidates in PLC Elections

Within its Elections Support Program, MIFTAH has increased the readiness of 50 female cadres nominated by the Palestinian factions in four clusters (north, middle and south of the West Bank and Gaza Strip) to enable them to participate in the anticipated legislative elections. A series of training workshops over 12 days took place in various districts for supporting women's participation in the Palestinian Legislative Council [PLC] elections as candidates.

1.6.2 MIFTAH completes guidebook aimed at promoting women's participation in peace and security and trains WIFAQ members on its use

MIFTAH organized two workshops in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the course of two days to train WIFAQ committee members on the use of the guidebook. A total of 27 WIFAQ members participated in the two workshops, 10 in Gaza and 17 in the West Bank. The guidebook addresses the main elements for promoting social awareness on civic peace and women's participation in peace and security efforts.

1.6.3 MIFTAH caps off training workshop for women and youth organizations on public budget analysis

MIFTAH organized a training workshop that targeted a group of women and youth organizations in order to build civil society capacities and to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to read and analyze the public budget and actual expenditure reports. Another objective was to provide them with monitoring and social accountability tools for the public budget and to measure the extent of compatibility of budgets, fiscal policies and programs from a gender perspective.

1.6.4 Participatory budget workshops for coordinators of the Ministry of Social Development's joint planning councils

MIFTAH organized a series of training workshops on participatory budgets for coordinators of the Ministry of Development's joint planning councils. The workshops showcased the basic

concepts for preparing plans, objectives and the concept of the public budget, mechanisms for its preparation and the participatory budget.

1.6.5 Training workshop for the Gender Support Team at the Ministry of Interior: International agreements on gender-related human rights

MIFTAH held a training workshop on international agreements pertaining to gender-related human rights, which targeted the Gender Support Team at the Palestinian Ministry of Interior. A total of 40 members of the team attended from the various directorates.

1.6.6 Training on the assessment guidebook on the performance of LGUs on the Gender Charter

MIFTAH, in coordination with the Gender Forum and Local Governance, completed a five-day workshop for members of the forum on the use of the guidebook.

II. To Strengthen National Unity and International Awareness of the Palestinian Narrative

2.1 Enhance internal dialogue to reach consensus on key political positions imperative to the Palestinians

2.1.1 A proposed vision for conciliatory elections to restore the unity of the West Bank and Gaza Strip

MIFTAH held a closed session, during which political leaders, political analysts and specialists discussed a proposed vision on conciliatory elections to restore the unity of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The vision was presented by member of MIFTAH's Board of Directors, Dr. Azmi Al-Shuaibi. The vision focused on the assumption that the stage of national liberation and confronting the Zionist settlement colonial project requires abandoning the idea of using the election results to monopolize power by any party without the participation of others, and respecting the principle of partnership, by agreeing that the direct election goal must be to restore the unity of the West Bank and Gaza. This means unity for a single geographic and demographic entity with an elected Legislative Council, exercising its oversight and legislative role, and a government of national unity to be formed through partnership, which will facilitate the reform and activation of Palestine Liberation Organization institutions. This unity will also facilitate the role of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions in the service of the Palestinian national project. The vision also called for the development of a document of general principles to achieve the primary goal of national elections as a mechanism to revive democratic life within national institutions, primarily the Palestinian Legislative Council and one partnership-based government.

2.1.2 “Hosted by MIFTAH”

Interviews with prominent individuals and political leaders were conducted, to share current political developments at the national and international levels and their impact on the Palestinian cause and published on MIFTAH’s website under “Hosted by MIFTAH”.

Throughout 2019, the following interviews were published:

Ambassador Amal Jadou; Undersecretary of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, talked about the decision by the European Court of Justice to label Israeli settlement products and the political and economic implications of this decision. Jadou also talked about the possibility of this decision to pave the way for other achievements at the political level, whether in the European Union or in other international arenas

Dr. Jad Ishaq; Director of ARIJ [The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem] talked about the consequences of the statement of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the practical mechanisms the Palestinian leadership can use to confront the US administration, which is financially and politically embargoing the leadership.

Knesset member Aida Touma-Suleiman; member of the Joint List for the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, talked about the repercussions of the results of the latest Israeli elections on Palestinian citizens inside the Green Line, especially after the Joint List emerged as the third largest power in the elections, in addition to the repercussions of these results on the Palestinian political scene.

Dr. Ghassan al-Khatib; Lecturer in Cultural Studies and Contemporary Arab Studies at Birzeit University, discussed the repercussions of recent political developments, including those pertaining to the “Deal of the Century” and the Bahrain workshop on the economic dimension of the deal. He also discussed the possible options for the Palestinian leadership to address these developments, in addition to several developments at the regional and local levels.

Dr. Ammar Dweik; Director General of The Independent Commission for Human Rights – ICHR, discussed the legitimacy of the decision of the Constitutional Court to dissolve the Palestinian Legislative Council, as well as its decision regarding the superiority of international conventions and treaties over national legislation in keeping with the national, religious and cultural identity of the Palestinian Arab people.

Dr. Nasr Abdulkarim; Professor of Finance and Economics at the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the Arab American University in Ramallah, discussed the repercussions of the decision by Israeli occupation authorities to withhold Palestinian clearance revenues, the PA’s financial crisis and its impact on the various social groups in Palestinian society, especially vulnerable and marginalized families who receive monthly allocations from the government.

2.2 Promoting the Palestinian Narrative as a Just and Fair Cause

2.2.1 Presenting Credible Discourse on Palestine and Palestinians

In partnership with the Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy (PIPD), MIFTAH continued its work on promoting the Palestinian narrative as a just and fair cause. This joint effort enabled us to reach millions of people and engage new audiences through a discourse on the values of freedom, justice equality and rights. It was able to raise awareness about core issues and reflect the reality of life in Palestine through humanizing campaigns, videos and the possibility of a virtual trip to Palestine. The virtual trip has become a necessity especially after Israel prevented Democratic Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar from entering the occupied West Bank as part of a visiting delegation organized by MIFTAH.

These multifaceted campaigns were effective in outreach to people beyond the echo chamber of Palestinian solidarity and engaged with the shifting dynamics of US and European politics and focused particularly on millennials and younger generations.

- **The Palestine VR Application**

The virtual reality smart phone application offers a 360-degree immersive tours of Palestine, where users can walk the old city of Jerusalem, enjoy the lively city of Ramallah, experience life in a refugee camp in Bethlehem and stand on the shores of Gaza overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Viewers will witness the beauty of Palestine and its people but also the injustice that takes place there every day. These tours and stories reflect the reality of life in Palestine, where oppression, discrimination and displacement are met with hope and resilience.

Palestine VR is meant to offer its users with a perspective that is often missing from mainstream media and one that has been often suppressed. It gives normal people a platform to get their voices heard and it uses technology to break barriers, stereotypes and misinformation about Palestine and the aspirations of a people struggling for freedom and rights. This application is a gateway to see what the Israelis don't want the world to see. Palestine VR breaks down the walls and fences built by Israel, and lets Palestinians take control of their own narrative.

Palestine VR app: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/palestine-vr/id1483465433>

The application was downloaded over 10,000 times and covered by the Washington Post, Time Magazine, Al-Jazeera, AJ+, Now This and many more top-tier media outlets.

- **Hate Speech in Israeli Society (1):**

This campaign was based on a report by PIPD's partner, 7amleh, which aggregates the data and trends of hate speech targeting Palestinians and Arabs on Israeli social media. PIPD ran a

campaign raising awareness on this issue but showcasing young Palestinians reading out the hate speech targeting them to humanize the victims but also give them a platform to respond.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/158233651450504/videos/2233641993364849/>

The campaign was able to: Reach 752K people in the US and Europe and come across about 1.1 million people.

- **Hate Speech in Israeli Society (2):**

Following the first Hate Speech in Israeli Society Campaign, PIPD was heavily attacked with a targeted hate campaign. This was during the Israeli elections, and response video was made to draw the parallel between the attacks on PIPD, the dehumanization of Palestinians by Israeli politicians and how this fits into a trend within Israeli society that was more and more extremist.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/ThePIPD/videos/1554212154713470/>

The campaign was able to: Reach 715K people in the US and Europe and come across about 1.2 million people.

- **International Women's Day:**

For International Women's Day, PIPD ran a campaign to raise awareness about the plight of Palestinian Women Prisoners in Israeli jails by showcasing an interview of a Palestinian prisoner that recounts a horrible story of her inmate that was confined in an isolated cell, facing horrific discrimination and violence in an Israeli prison.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/158233651450504/videos/384243059031472/>

The campaign was able to: Reach 887K people in the US and Europe and come across about 1.27 million people.

2.2.2 Young Human Rights Defenders Commence Monitoring and Documenting Violations in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Gaza

Thirty Seven Young Human Rights Defenders monitored and documented more than 500 human rights violations committed by Israeli occupation forces in the Old City of Jerusalem, Old City of Hebron, and access restricted areas in the Gaza Strip.

The area of focus in each of the three geographical area depended on results of a mapping study that MIFTAH conducted in this regard and based on consultations with relevant stakeholder. Thus, the focus in the West Bank is on the right to education and cultural rights relevant to Palestinian national identity. As such, within the framework of the right to education,

focus is on house arrests, conditions of classrooms, obstacles to accessing schools, school drop-outs and the taught curriculum. In terms of cultural rights connected to Palestinian national identity, focus is on the curriculum taught in schools, right to worship and access to religious sites, imposition of constraints and harassment of organizations working in the field of culture, in addition to the imposition of restrictions on expanding and renovating shops and structures. Conversely, in Gaza, focus is on the right to work and right to healthcare. Within the framework of the right to work, focus is on the targeting of fishermen and farmers and adherence to workers' rights. Alternatively, within the framework of the right to health, focus is on the granting of medical treatment permits, obstacles to accessing medical facilities, quality of services and medical negligence, and provision and availability of health services.

These documentations of human rights violations were collated in quarterly reports for opening dialogue and discussions with different stakeholders and duty bearers.

2.2.3 MIFTAH's Participation in Regional and International Forums; Palestinian Rights under Occupation with focus on women and youth.

During 2019, MIFTAH participated in several international forums and meetings, in which it highlighted the reality of Palestinian women under occupation.

MIFTAH, represented by Lamis Shuaibi, participated in the **regional consultation workshop on women status within Beijing platform +25**. The consultation workshop concluded that a regional report will be prepared to highlight on Arab women status based on Beijing Platform including 8 countries; Palestine, Jordan, Tunis, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon

MIFTAH, represented by Riham Al Faqih, participated in the regional meeting organized by the General Union of Palestinian Women in Amman on **Ways to Advocate for Palestinian Refugee Women's Rights in CEDAW Shadow Reports**.

MIFTAH, represented by Youssef Dajani, on behalf of the Board of Directors, participated in a high-level ministerial conference on **'Strengthening the role of women in Post-Conflict Societies in the Arab region and the lessons learned from all over the world'** in Cairo, Egypt. The conference included the presentation of a number of working papers, which focused on the vital role of women in peace-building and mediation during the occupation, political transition and conflict in paving the way for post-conflict priorities.

MIFTAH participated in the **Tunis Forum for Gender Equality** in April, represented by Maysoun Qawasmi, who presented an intervention on "The Priorities for Action with International Institutions and Diplomatic Missions in Palestine". Qawasmi also presented the reality of women's participation in Palestine in decision-making process and the adoption of the women's movement of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Qawasmi also emphasized in her

intervention the most important strategies to work on women, peace and security issues, first and foremost ending the occupation and holding it accountable for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people.

MIFTAH also participated in the International Conference "**Women between Patriarchy, Colonialism and Occupation**" at Al-Najah National University, represented by Tamara Tamimi, who presented a working paper entitled "Protection of Women from Violence in times of Armed Conflict: Palestinian Women as a framework of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, women, peace and security agenda and international criminal law". The paper continued to present the most prominent forms of the violence perpetrated by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people as a whole, and its disproportionate impact on Palestinian women.

MIFTAH also participated in several meetings and dialogues with international missions during **the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63)** in New York, represented by Riham Al Faqih. The priority topic of this session focused on social protection systems, opportunities to benefit from public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality purposes. Discussions on the role of Security Council Member States in holding the occupation accountable for its crimes against the Palestinians was discussed, highlighting the lack of services provided to women especially in area "C" of the West Bank.

Tamara Tamimi represented MIFTAH in the international conference organized by the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Geneva entitled "**Preservation of the Cultural and Religious Character of Jerusalem.**" MIFTAH's participation comes within the framework of the "Palestinian Narrative and Political Dialogue" program and in line with its strategic priorities in highlighting violations of international human rights law by the occupying forces against the Palestinian people, especially those that take place in Jerusalem.

4. Documentary and Advocacy Films

- The production of an advocacy film that addresses the documentation of information and data pertaining to the structure the **General Union of Palestine Students**. It also included facts and figures about GUPS conferences, its role throughout the course of the Palestinian struggle and in the dissemination of the Palestinian narrative through its various branches around the world, in addition to the reasons that contributed to its shrinking role.
- The production of 5 short films about the **cases of five women victims of domestic violence** aimed at influencing public opinion, forming social awareness around the protection of women, combatting violence that threatens women and families and also focusing on civic peace in Palestinian society. The films revolves around five women who were killed by family members for various reasons, most of which point to the

absence of protective laws for women and the gaps in litigation procedures for perpetrators of homicides against women.

Please follow the link to see the films:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MiftahOrganization>

- Identifying **Gaps within the NRS based on assessing the needs for women with disabilities victims of GBV** and the challenges they face to access protection services within the system; an info-graphic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLAwQQdCw3c>

- Raising awareness on the **Constitutional Principles** within Palestinian society and the importance of engaging the public and civil society organizations in drafting the constitution:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LXS4M65N3IjQsWn8zVWzBk3URO20s_iW/view

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1veyTw6PKh85Harlon3EFhKBMEsRZcjeK>

5. **MIFTAH's Publications in 2019:**

Policy and position papers:

- Education and vocational and technical training in the West Bank from a gender perspective

Guidebooks:

- Executive Internal Regulations to Activate Institutionalization of the Gender Charter in Local Councils and Manual of Procedures and Regulations to Support Implementation of the Charter.
- Guidebook of Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators for the Performance of LGUs in Implementing the Gender Charter
- Concepts and steps for preparing the public budget, budget cycle, budget proposal, accountability, and international transparency standards
- Promoting Women's Participation in Peace and Security
- Concepts and steps for preparing the public budget, budget cycle, budget proposal, accountability, and international transparency standards

Factsheet:

- **DEMOLISHED LIVES:** Israel's policy of home demolitions and its impact on women

- Women and Vocational Training in the West Bank - availability, challenges and gaps
- The Reform of the PLO as a National Necessity
- The Impact of the Political Division on National and Social Reconciliation
- Fundamental Freedoms in Palestine in light of the Political Division
- Social Assistance and Economic Empowerment Program Budget / Ministry of Social Development for the year 2018
- Inclusion and Protection Program Budget / Ministry of Social Development 2018-2019

Special studies:

- Report on the Gender Charter in Local Government - Developing Gender Policies in Local Government
- A Rapid Assessment of the National Referral System: implementation, challenges and gaps
- Analytical Study: CEDAW General Recommendations 30, 32 and 35
- Actual spending Reports for MoSD 2018 from a Gender Perspective.
- Distribution of the Tax Burden and Progressivity 2018-2019
- Gaps within the NRS based on assessing the needs for women with disabilities victims of GBV
- The rights and gender gaps in procedures and policies enacted in Sharia and Ecclesiastical courts. These gaps constitute an obstacle to women and girls' access to justice, particularly in matters relating to the age of marriage, legal personality, divorce, guardianship, custody and joint funds.

Workshop proceedings

- Constitutional Principles in Palestine- Expanded Workshop Proceedings- 25 June 2019

Leaflet:

- The Constitution - Introductory Bulletin

6. Challenges and Risk Analysis:

MIFTAH is aware of the risks associated with the implementation of the programs' activities, many of which are general and pertain to all development projects in Palestine while others are specific to projects that promote Good Governance and the Palestinian Narrative. The main risks currently pertaining to the work of MIFTAH and means of risk mitigation are summarized below:

1. The ongoing Palestinian political divide between WB and GS and the paralyzes of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Given the complex political context, this risk will need to be accepted. However the outputs of MIFTAH's work result in an informed and organized cadre of mostly women and men who are politically aware and alert.

2. The unstable political Palestinian situation linked to the continued Israeli occupation over Palestinian land and its control over financial and natural resources. The escalating political situation in Palestine, in addition to the restrictions on movement between districts imposed by Israeli military forces in the West Bank and the closure of Gaza Strip constitute a major challenge against an efficient implementation of the planned activities. The escalating crisis in Gaza constitutes a major challenge alongside the timely accomplishment of the planned group meetings and training workshops.
3. The absence of an Access to Information Law restricts ability to access certain public fiscal data. MIFTAH has access and experience in approaching high positioned political figures and soliciting cooperation with governmental bodies on such issues and or securing information from main source (government) and alternative credible sources.
4. Lack of political will from the PA to issue laws and legislations in support of women with the continuous delays in ratifying the Family Protection Bill. However, MIFTAH, in coordination and collaboration with other human rights and women organizations, continued to push for the adoption of more progressive policies that would support women and youth.
5. Intensive focus on addressing HR and IHL in Palestine among CSOs means there is a chance of overlap with other national programs. MIFTAH conducted assessments including mapping of other programs as well as provided intensive consultations with different stakeholders including CSOs. MIFTAH encourages regular coordination with national coalitions including Human Rights National and International Organizations.
6. Shrinking space of CSOs in Palestine from both the leading authorities and the Israeli NGO monitor. MIFTAH continued to provide credible information, evidence based researches, facts and figures and statements to reflect on the reality within the Palestinian status/context.
7. Continued Palestinian youth and women's political underrepresentation. MIFTAH adopts policies, strategies, advocacy campaigns and programs to promote the political role of youth including women to transform in the direction of leadership and create a stable ground for lobbying at the policy-making level to enforce formulating responsive and inclusive policies and regulations with a remarkable advocacy youth mobilization to restore their right as youth in leading the GUPS.