



**Press Release, 12 April 2021**

***Kayan - Feminist Organization presents its in-depth research on the phenomenon of femicide in Arab society***

Kayan – Feminist Organization held a press conference today, Monday, 12 April 2021, in which it presented its in-depth research report on femicide in Arab society called, “Femicide: a grim reality and possibilities for resistance.” This report sheds light on the phenomenon of femicide of Palestinian women, analyzes these crimes from a feminist and societal point of view, and offers recommendations for addressing this problem in the future.

The presenters were: Rafah Anabtawi, General Director of Kayan; Randa Siniora, General Director of WCLAC – Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling; Abeer Baker, lawyer and legal counsel of Kayan; Mona Mahajneh, researcher and Director of the Community Department at Kayan; and Amany Ibraheem, field research assistant.

Ruzeen Odeh, board member of Kayan, journalist, and activist, opened the press conference by welcoming the attendees and stressing the importance of this research, which is the first ever investigation of its kind focused on Arab society in Israel and will serve as an important contribution to the existing body of research on violence against women. Odeh continued: “We hope that this report represents a quantum leap in our understanding of the critical aspects related to femicide in order to address this phenomenon that kills many women in our society for doing nothing other than being women. We at Kayan invite all concerned organizations and institutions to do further work on these aspects, and we hope to achieve some of the recommendations in the report.”

The first presenter was researcher Mona Mahajneh, who presented the topic of femicide from the perspective of the families of the victims, which is one of the main viewpoints that she investigated with co-researcher, Dr. Rabab Tamish. This viewpoint, previously unexplored in research in the Arab world, adds to our understanding of the political, societal, and economic structures that contribute to the perpetuation of femicide. Mahajneh reviewed the various stages of the research process, starting with training the field researchers and conducting 22 interviews with families and close friends of 14 women who were killed over the past five years. She also overviewed the role of society, the media, the police, and other official institutions such as social welfare offices, and their respective contributions to maintaining or decreasing the phenomenon. Mahajneh also presented several important quotes from the research and interviews with families, giving an outline of the type of relationships that the victims had with their family and friends, as well as the type of relationship that linked the victim to the perpetrator(s) and the alleged motives for the crime.

The next speaker was Randa Siniora, General Director of the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) in Ramallah. Siniora said, “Violence against women is always an expression of patriarchy in various societies, regardless of their individual beliefs and culture, and this patriarchy is reflected in several levels. Violence against women is a clear violation of various provisions of international human rights law, including the right not to be subjected to abuse and the right to personal safety. Violence comes from both family as well as society, and is perpetuated by both official authorities and private bodies on adult women and girl children alike. Some women are especially

vulnerable, such as female migrant workers who are subjected to violence because of their status, or detained women or women with disabilities.” Siniora indicated that WCLAC has been the target of widespread criticism and fierce attacks due to its role in monitoring and documenting violence against women, as well as because it has become a reference for many official institutions and the media in matters related to violence against women in the West Bank. She pointed out that most of these accusations claimed that the numbers of victims were inflated by WCLAC because there are official institutions that provide lower figures. Siniora pointed out that the center does not limit its definition of femicide to the common and widely circulated concept of honor killing. She explained the utility of broadening the definition of femicide to include suicides, so-called “accidents,” or deaths in mysterious circumstances, all of which contribute to the taking of lives of women and girls.

Next, Abeer Baker, who works as legal counsel to Kayan, presented on the topic of the role of the police and their negligence in cases of femicide against Arab women, as well as their lack of cooperation with the researchers and refusal to provide Kayan with necessary data and information. Baker stressed: “There is a great need to investigate the work of police and the prosecution, in light of the increase in the number of women murdered and a data blackout surrounding each case. We must assume that the case of each woman does not begin with her murder, but rather that there is a case history to each incident. It is important to explore the details, while taking into account the privacy of each woman.” Baker explained that after the police refused to disclose any useful details related to the investigations, Kayan decided to take its case to the judicial system and petition the police and the Attorney General’s office to demand the disclosure of relevant information. She said that Kayan’s petition is still pending in the District Court of Jerusalem, and neither the police nor the Attorney General has responded. Baker presented some of the information that the police did agree to provide, including striking data on the murder weapons used against women. An analysis of the data indicated that half (50%) of the women were killed as a result of physical abuse by their husbands, while a sharp object was used in 37.5% of cases, and an actual weapon was used in only 12.5% of cases. Baker stated that the prevalence of physical violence as the cause of death reflects the extent of the violence inflicted on women, which cannot be accidental or out of the ordinary, but rather tells the story of husbands who are so used to perpetrating physical violence to increasing degrees of severity until they reach the point of taking a human life.

Rafah Anabtawi, General Director of Kayan, concluded the press conference by presenting the most prominent findings and recommendations of the report, saying: “This report, in its various aspects, shows the complex reality that Palestinian women experience in Israel. Palestinian women face many levels of discrimination that contribute to the phenomenon of violence against them, including femicide, because they are both women in a traditional and patriarchal society that excludes them and discriminates against them in all walks of life, as well as members of a national minority in a racist state that pursues racist policies that systematically discriminate against Palestinians, including Palestinian women.” Based on the report as well as Kayan’s long experience in the field working on its project to combat violence against women and reduce femicide, Anabtawi reported that the general attitude among the Palestinian minority in Israel is that the police and other official institutions do not uphold their legal duties in any matters related to violence against Palestinian women, including murder. She also explained that the research data confirmed the feeling that the social welfare offices do not perform their role properly. Anabtawi emphasized the role that a patriarchal society plays in contributing to an entrenched culture of violence, as well as the fact that the media generally does not contribute to solving the problem of violence, and in fact often contributes to its perpetuation. The issue of violence is not made a priority on the public agenda, and it is imperative that this changes. She stated that the report outlined a number of recommendations that must be worked in order to combat the phenomenon of femicide, starting with the need to pressure the police to properly document data related to this topic, including the number of victims, number of indictments submitted, information about restraining orders, and the issuance of protection orders for women

who suffer from violence and who are threatened with death. Anabtawi concluded by urging work on the topic of femicide prevention to be done internationally and in the frameworks of feminist and human rights and civil society organizations.

To learn more about Kayan: <http://kayanfeminist.org>