

Strength and Creativity: Grassroots Women Leaders Making Change

Annual Report 2021

Kayan – Feminist Organization





Strength and Creativity: Grassroots Women Leaders Making Change Annual Report 2021 // Kayan - Feminist Organization

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Table of Contents

Letter from Our Director.....	4-5
Our story, mission, and vision	6
Our board and staff.....	7
Kayan's approach to social change	8
Impact in 2021	10-12
2021: A year of unity in crisis	13
Combatting violence from the grassroots	14-16
Jusur Forum of Women Leaders: grassroots women leading the way	17-18
Knowledge is Power: Promoting women's rights and access to justice	18-19
Working to eliminate femicide	20-21
Increasing women's participation in local councils	22
Engaging youth today to change tomorrow's society	23-25
Advocating internationally for Palestinian women	26
Palestinian feminist activism across borders	26-27
Women working on the Right of Return	28
What comes next	29
Financial report	30
How to support Kayan	31
With thanks to our supporters	32

A message from our General Director

Dear Friends,

In these continuing times of uncertainty and upheaval, we are more grateful than ever for your steadfast support of our work empowering grassroots Palestinian women and youth.

During the first half of 2021, our work was strongly affected by the escalation of the political conflict facing our region, which included a wave of violence. As the most vulnerable members of society, Palestinian women and youth were especially affected by this situation, including experiencing violations of their democratic and human rights of freedom of expression and the right to demonstrate. Kayan continued to work with local grassroots women and our Jusur Forum of Palestinian women leaders to help them amplify their voices and take their rightful place in the local public-political sphere. We are in awe of the grassroots women activists who rallied together to support our communities, raise awareness about political issues from a feminist perspective, and continue to lead a sustainable and impactful Palestinian feminist movement.

Highlights of 2021 included deepening our work with youth, such as through “Start to Listen”: an international project with several feminist organizations around the world that brought together diverse youth to learn about feminism and activism. Our local youth group started on the path towards activism by producing three podcasts about Palestinian feminist issues. Another highlight was the publication of our report, “Femicide: A Grim Reality and Possibilities for Resistance,” which represented the culmination of an extensive research process and has given us



concrete data to aid us in our continued activism against violence and femicide in Palestinian society.

In these challenging times, our work is more urgent than ever. Through our holistic, grassroots approach, we will continue to empower Palestinian women and youth to demand their human and civil rights in order to create a more democratic and just society. None of this would be possible without your generous support and interest in our work. On behalf of Kayan's staff, board, and grassroots network, thank you again.

In peace and solidarity,
Rafah Anabtawi
General Director

Our Story

Kayan was founded in 1998 by a group of Arab Palestinian feminists in Haifa who sought to advance the status of Palestinian women in Israel. As a feminist, grassroots organization, we take a bottom-up approach to advocating for women's rights. Since Kayan's inception, we have dedicated ourselves to dismantling the root causes of gender-based discrimination in Palestinian society through community outreach, community organizing, developing initiatives empowering women and youth, legal aid, and local and international advocacy. Through our community work, we provide personal and group empowerment, assist local women's groups with community organizing, including creative awareness-raising campaigns, and provide trainings and ongoing support on topics related to women's needs on the local and national levels. In our legal program, we provide free legal aid to Palestinian women and work with local, national, and international institutions to both promote and uphold Palestinian women's rights. We also provide women with holistic legal and emotional support through our hotline, which is available 24/7. We are determined to enhance Palestinian women's leadership while consolidating their collective power and advancing their social, economic, and political rights.

Our Mission

Kayan strives towards consolidating an active, systematic, nationwide Arab Palestinian feminist movement that actively affects social change through contesting the root causes of gender-based discrimination, defending and promoting the rights of women, and ensuring their integration into decision-making positions.

Our Vision

Kayan envisions a secure and just society free of gender-based discrimination, in which Arab Palestinian women in Israel enjoy full and equitable opportunities for self-actualization, and take a leading and active part in society through realizing their individual and collective rights.

Our Team

Rafah Anabtawi, *General Director*

Rawia Lucia, *Community Coordinator*

Nisreen Tabare, *Hotline and Voluntary Work Coordinator*

Iman Jabbour, *Media Coordinator*

Francis Tams, *Accountant*

Hajar Abu Salih, *Community Organizer*

Alhan Nahhas-Daoud, *Advocate*

Nisreen Massarwi-Odeh, *Advocate*

Rebecca Metzger, *Development Coordinator*

Leandra Hettenbach, *Development Coordinator*

Cecilia Yen, *Development Coordinator**

*Cecilia transitioned off Kayan's staff at the end of 2021

Our Board

Dr. Hanaa Hamdan-Saliba

Mariam Haj Khoury

Boshra Rashed Awwad

Reem Haj

Ruzeen Odeh

Abeer Bkheet



Kayan's Approach to Social Change

Our context

Palestinian women navigate a complex socio-political environment in Israel and encounter overlapping oppressions: as a marginalized minority in a discriminatory and increasingly religious-nationalistic Jewish state, and as women in a patriarchal society. Society condones violence and shaming as means of control over women's behavior, and Palestinian women face numerous obstacles to seeking and receiving justice from a discriminatory state and legal system. Israeli personal status law (e.g. marriage, divorce, child custody) is governed not civilly but by heavily patriarchal religious courts, often trapping women in inequitable and dangerous situations with a drastic power imbalance. The Covid-19 crisis and the May 2021 political crisis in our region have increased the vulnerability of Palestinian women. Kayan worked this year to mitigate those circumstances and continue to empower grassroots women to put women's needs on the public agenda and to increase women's participation in the public sphere.

Jusur Forum: a grassroots movement led by grassroots women

Our grassroots women's movement addresses the issues described above and forges a path to gender equality through community-based activism that builds sustainable change from the roots. The movement is led by Jusur Forum, 25 Arab Palestinian women activists representing local women's groups across the Palestinian society, who consolidate collective power using a community organizing model to ensure the sustainability of community-based initiatives for social change. Together, Kayan and Jusur Forum discuss and address critical issues and strategize local and national action plans to promote community organizing and social activism for women and youth. Activities include awareness-raising campaigns, creative field work, and extensive collaboration to connect the local and national levels of advocacy.

In 2021, our network of local women's groups and the national Jusur Forum have continued to raise awareness and work for change to respond to violence against Palestinian women in Israel through different channels, including workshops, distribution of brochures, and activities/communication with local authorities and the wider community, including men and youth. With the recent political crisis, grassroots women have opened up new opportunities to cooperate with local youth activists.

“With tools and support from Kayan, women take responsibility in every area”.

Maha, Jusur Forum member from Kabul

Impact in 2021

Empowering the community



10

Women local councilors (out of 16) received continual support and guidance from Kayan in their work

Women leading the way



21

Localities were reached through the work of Kayan, Jusur Forum, our local women's groups, and our 16 Days Campaign coalition partners

2,300

people directly participated in

47

local grassroots women's public awareness-raising activities related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

33

Events

in

13

localities were held during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign

Supporting our communities in crisis



83

cases pertaining to threats and violence against women were addressed by Kayan's hotline during the May 2021 political crisis alone

22

member organizations participated in the cross-border (West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel) Fada Coalition formed by Kayan

8

coalitions and international advocacy groups in which Kayan represents a Palestinian feminist perspective

Making change through awareness-raising



2.8

million
reached through
Facebook

36

Interviews with Kayan
staff, Jusur Forum
women and Fada
Coalition leaders

42

radio and television
interviews

68

written pieces, columns
and interviews published
about Kayan's work

Making our voices heard



5,000

views of the video of our
femicide press conference

3

[Podcasts](#) created by
Kayan's youth activists
in collaboration with
NGOs worldwide

1

unique and ground-
breaking [report on
femicide](#) of Palestinian
women in Israel

2021: A Year of Unity in Crisis

During the first half of 2021, our work was strongly affected by the political challenges facing our region, which included a wave of violence. As the most vulnerable members of the community, Palestinian women and youth were especially affected by this situation. Kayan responded by working intensively with local grassroots women, Jusur Forum, and youth to help them respond to rights violations and raise awareness about related issues such as land and housing rights; expanding our hotline services; and cooperating with local governmental leaders and NGOs on crisis initiatives.

“Life in the year 2021 began to come back in the wake of the Corona pandemic, but women crawled behind. That is why it is so important for us to provide women with a steady path so that they can begin to walk outside, and even to run.”

Rawia Lucia, Kayan's Community Coordinator

For more information about Kayan's response to the May political crisis, see our newsletter from [August 2021](#).



Combatting Violence From the Grassroots

Our network of local women's groups and the national Jusur Forum have continued to raise awareness and work for change to the current situation of violence against Palestinian women in Israel through local and national initiatives, including workshops, brochures, campaigns, and activities with local authorities and the community, including men, and youth.



Mobilizing the hotline

Kayan responded to the crisis of violence against women by expanding its legal and emotional support hotline to be available 24/7, as well as opening a text messaging option to increase accessibility. Grassroots women spread wide scale awareness of this resource through social media. They also positioned themselves as trusted

advocates for women in their communities, ensuring that women in need felt comfortable approaching them to ask about available help, including the hotline.



16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign (25 Nov - 10 Dec)

Our 2021 16 Days Campaign was a huge success. The campaign took place across various Palestinian cities and towns in Israel, and involved a diverse range of events, such as marches, workshops involving women and men, discussion groups, art activities, and youth workshops in community centers and schools. The campaign also involved an extensive social media drive, including eye-catching feminist infographics challenging patriarchal norms.



Masculinity and the root causes of violence



The theme of this year's campaign was how masculinity is a root cause of SGBV, and how social scripts dictate all of our behaviours. This year's launch event symbolised the theme through the wearing of masks over the whole face with the names of femicide victims written on them, and also through handing out eyeglasses cleaners with feminist slogans on them, symbolizing clearing one's vision to witness the patriarchy.

Impact: The 16 Days Campaign **reached 1,893 people**, including **577 girls and 441 boys through 9 school and youth-related workshops.**

Kayan's Facebook and Instagram posts during the 16 Days Campaign **received over 2 million views from over 1.6 million viewers**

Videos shared during the 16 Days Campaign on Kayan's YouTube channel gained **more than 189,000 views.**

Jusur Forum of Women Leaders: grassroots women leading the way



The Jusur Forum played a vital role in Kayan's mobilization in the wake of the May 2021 political crisis, rallying youth to become activists and representing women's issues in the media and on the national agenda.

Planning for a better future

This year the Jusur Forum had its first retreat since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. It took place in Majdal Shams and the women leaders discussed the land rights issues related to the occupied Golan Heights. They also carried out extensive strategic planning for their annual conference, the theme of which will be the intersection between land and housing rights and women's issues. This was determined by the attempts to push aside women's issues in the wake of the May 2021 political crisis, and Jusur's concerted efforts to put women and women's needs back on the agenda.

Constantly learning

The Jusur Forum underwent a series of media trainings in order to support them in amplifying their voices. Each interactive training day included several sessions led by an expert media trainer, who introduced tools and skills on how to better present their messages through digital and social media.

Impact: All the Jusur Forum women leaders reported that their learnings and real-time feedback helped them **improve as leaders** and **empowered them** as feminist activists.

“Kayan is the kayan [entity, being, existence] of each woman; this organization pushes boundaries in all its initiatives. It gives all the necessary awareness-raising lectures and educational sessions for whomever needs anything. It has created women leaders and sowed the seeds of volunteering and compassion. Kayan is my backbone – it strengthens me and increases my knowledge”

Roz, Jusur Forum member from Arraba

Knowledge is Power: promoting women’s rights and access to justice

We saw a significant increase in workplace harassment as a result of the May 2021 crisis. This was part of a larger trend of violations to the right of self-expression. Many people experienced threats based solely on their nationality or involvement in political activism, including posting on social media and demonstrating. Many

Palestinians reported that their employers attempted to censor them by threatening them with firing if they did not stop joining demonstrations or posting on Facebook – for example, posting in support of detained family members. Some reported receiving threats of dismissal on the basis of their participation in the Palestinian general strike on May 18, 2021. Others said they were subjected to investigation by security personnel in their workplace. Kayan offered legal consultations through our hotline to women affected by this affront to freedom.

Combatting sexual harassment

Kayan has been working intensively with more than a dozen appointees for the prevention of sexual harassment. In 2021, we continued to hold lectures and workshops in workplaces to help women claim their rights and push employers to realize their responsibilities for workplace safety and equality.

Promoting women's rights in matters of personal status

Many of the women who access Kayan's hotline are facing issues related to their disempowerment in the realm of personal status. In Israel, matters of marriage, divorce, and child custody are under the total jurisdiction of the religious courts. Women are discriminated against in the religious courts, violating women's right to equal and fair treatment and promoting conditions of domestic abuse. Kayan advocates for women's equal treatment in the religious courts and their right to access civil courts, as well as continually providing individual counseling and legal support via our hotline. This year, Kayan collected data on rights violations in issues of personal status for a report to the UN Human Rights Committee regarding Israel's conduct in relation to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Kayan demanded that women be given the right to choose between civil and religious courts in matters of marriage and divorce and held the religious courts to account for their lack of transparency, including their refusal to publish their fees and their refusal to use Arabic when publishing their legislation

Working to Eliminate Femicide

Addressing the lack of holistic research and documentation on femicide in Palestinian society, even as cases increased, Kayan published a ground-breaking report on femicide, the first ever of its kind on Palestinian society in Israel, which represented the culmination of an extensive research process on this topic performed in 2020. The report presented previously unexplored angles on the causes of femicide, including unprecedented field research on the family and friends of victims. It also included research Kayan performed on coverage by the Arab media; the roles and responsibilities of state institutions, primarily the Israeli police; and Israel's compliance with international treaties concerning the rights of women.

Raising awareness to change a grim reality

Through publishing our research report and publicizing it through intensive media work such as an international press conference, as well as through our grassroots, regional, and international networks, we have raised and will continue to raise critical awareness about the urgent topic of femicide to improve the safety of Palestinian women citizens of Israel. Since the report came out, we have continued to promote awareness of different angles on this topic through social media. In January 2021, we inaugurated a campaign to share the names and stories of femicide victims, with our social media posts just on femicide reaching over 97,000 people in 2021.

Impact: Each Facebook post related to the report and press conference had a reach averaging several thousand people, with peak engagement **reaching up to 13,826 people.**

Holding state institutions to account

Kayan used legal means to compel institutions to provide information about femicide cases between 2015-2020 through the Freedom of Information Law. After over a year of persistent legal advocacy, Kayan began to receive partial information on some of these cases, revealing information such as the fact that many cases were closed without indictment and remain unsolved to this day. We have continued to work to overcome the state's stonewalling, which remains a barrier to accountability and transparency, and in turn to access to justice for Palestinian women.

Ongoing work in the courts

Kayan has given extensive legal support to the family of Wafa'a Abhara, a femicide victim, as the trial of the perpetrator goes through the District Court. Kayan's in-house lawyer has attended court to provide legal support to the family on every day of the trial, and Kayan organized a public vigil outside the courthouse on the first anniversary of Wafa'a's death. This empowers the public with important information in real time, which they can use to hold institutions to account. It also empowers more women to come forward with their own stories.

Impact: In 2021, **54 media items** were published in the form of articles and radio and television broadcasts on the topic of Kayan's work on femicide, including in-depth interviews with Kayan's staff.



Increasing Women's Participation in Local Councils

Kayan continues to empower local women through our political training program. Topics on the curriculum include gender, feminism, and women's status in relation to Palestinian society; democracy and the voting process; enhancing leadership skills in areas such as communication and negotiation; developing political skills and knowledge in areas such as budgeting and building a campaign; and media training. Kayan trains the women regarding how to map the situation in their village and how to start the action plan they design. This includes training regarding how to know who the stakeholders are, what the challenges are, and what the needs and attitudes of the community are.

Impact: The local women's groups in **Deir Hanna** and **Yafit al-Nasre** have already determined that they will participate in the **2023 municipal elections**.

Supporting women local councilors

Kayan continues to support local councilors and women members of the local council. These women councilors are now far less dependent on Kayan's support through the empowerment model which we use, which has given them the tools, training, and confidence to work independently. Several meetings and ad-hoc consultations have been held with our staff, taking the form of emotional support and empowerment to deal with the patriarchal structures and norms these women local councilors are up against. Through this support, these women local councilors continue to work with Kayan to gain the necessary skills, knowledge and power to overcome the challenges they face, and to bring an innovative and feminist approach to local politics.

Impact: **The women local councilors** whom Kayan support and who have engaged with our approach have consistently shown that they have been **empowered to work professionally and fight** against the corrupt and sexist system in which they work.

Engaging Youth Today to Change Tomorrow's Society

Amplifying youth voices

Kayan expanded our youth outreach in 2021, engaging Palestinian youth in our grassroots feminist activism. Our 'Start to Listen' project, created in partnership with three feminist NGOs in different countries, involved 10 Palestinian youth (9 female and 1 male). The youth received technical training in the studio and participated in a series of workshop sessions about feminism, gender equality issues, and SGBV in the Palestinian context, as well as a session to discuss the recent political events. Kayan's youth activists produced three podcasts, including one featuring young Palestinian female rapper, Safaa Hathot, who highlighted the oppressions of being an Arab and a woman through her art. In another episode, Kayan's youth told the story of Sheikh Jarrah; the final episode was entitled "Feminism is Not Just for Women" and interviewed a feminist man who is a journalist, Baleegh Saldin. This project empowered Palestinian youth to explore and express their experiences and attitudes in a creative way, and to gain the knowledge and technical skills to produce more works of activism and self-expression in the future.

"Youth make up nearly a third of Palestinian society in Israel, and yet our voice and influence are still marginalized on most issues, even issues that affect our daily life and our future. With Kayan we have explored new directions and visions, which we implemented on the ground, by taking back our power and creating real opportunities to make decisions and to express our opinions, needs, and future aspirations. We learned how to empower other young people in the feminist struggle." Mohammad Itrad, Kayan youth activist

Palestinian women and youth unite



In the May 2021 political crisis, women and youth in Palestinian society organically came together as activists in a time of great upheaval. As two vulnerable groups in Palestinian society, it is unsurprising that the large amount of violence and unrest united them in a desire for change. Additionally, as a result of the May 2021 crisis, the majority of our local women's groups connected to and engaged with youth groups in their localities. The two demographics planned their crisis responses together. Finally, this increased exposure to youth enabled local women leaders and Jusur Forum members to gain valuable insights regarding increasing youth involvement in Kayan's future work.

“Initially, I didn't feel totally comfortable to be part of a group with young people from different towns, different cultures and beliefs. At Kayan we underwent a change process in which we all can hear and accept each other. We understood that ‘difference of opinion does not spoil the cause’, on the contrary, pluralism can only enrich us, and give everyone an opportunity to persuade others”

Suaad Abu-Saleh, Kayan youth activist

Making space for a generation of Kayan youth activists

In 2021, belief among Palestinian youth in the importance of social activism significantly increased. Kayan invited youth activists to have a larger role in our planning and implementation. By hosting them in person in our office, Kayan was able to create a safe space for youth to have their voice heard, and to expand their feminist knowledge and activism, empowering them to contribute to changing their communities and society. The youth participants created an action plan specific to their interests, for example, raising awareness about the issue of housing and evictions in Sheikh Jarrah, as well as the effect of lack of land and housing access on women and youth.

“Palestinian youth need spaces and institutions to embrace their potential and listen to their needs. Kayan gives us an opportunity to express ourselves and our needs; it provides us with a safe space. We are eagerly waiting for more projects to come.”

Aseel Mahagneh, Kayan youth activist



Advocating Internationally for Palestinian Women

Kayan is the only Palestinian feminist organization in Israel with Special Consultative Status at the UN. In 2021, we submitted a ground-breaking document on femicide in response to a call from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, who used the report for her reporting on femicide to the UN General Assembly. The UN also published the report on their website.

Kayan becomes a member in Euro-Med Rights

The EuroMed Rights General Assembly recently approved Kayan's membership in the network and its committees. This decision reflects an acknowledgement of Kayan's achievements and its role at the local and international levels, and recognition of the credibility of Kayan's work as a professional women's rights organization.

Palestinian Feminist Activism Across Borders

The Fada Coalition of Palestinian Women against Violence is an innovative collective that engages feminist groups across borders (West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel). Fada, which was formed by Kayan in 2020, is the first and only coalition of Palestinian feminist organizations that include groups based across all of historical Palestine. Our Fada Coalition partners are heavily involved in

planning and implementing our 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, expanding the reach of our awareness-raising campaigns.

In 2021, the Fada Coalition, along with other Palestinian feminist and human rights NGOs, united to publish a press release condemning the submission to the Knesset aiming to renew the law banning family reunification. The Fada Coalition also united with coalitions in the West Bank and Gaza to publicly protest and raise awareness against the inhumane conditions for Palestinian women prisoners in Israeli prisons. The Fada Coalition co-hosted a protest against the subjection of Palestinian women prisoners to a systematic process of rights violations from the moment of arrest, including during interrogation, where they face solitary confinement, night-time intrusions, medical neglect, and beatings during the sudden inspection of rooms, and during their transportation to the prison.



Women Working on the Right of Return

In light of the May 2021 crisis and the events in Sheikh Jarrah, Kayan has recommitted to our work empowering women's activism regarding issues of land, housing and the Right of Return from a gender-sensitive perspective. This raises women's awareness of their political context of occupation and the ongoing political oppressions which were implemented during the Nakba (the Catastrophe of 1948), such as evacuations of Palestinian families, evictions and house demolition, and confiscation of lands, and how this connects to women's issues and their daily life. We empower women to work for political and social change through workshops, lectures, raising awareness of discriminatory laws and policies, and tours to help us know our land and villages in order to understand our history and heritage.



What Comes Next...



Expanding our reach

This year, Kayan completed an in-depth gender analysis about feminist engagement with Palestinian men and youth. In 2022, Kayan will utilize this data and analysis to strengthen our engagement strategies to deepen our work with men and youth through our events and campaigns.

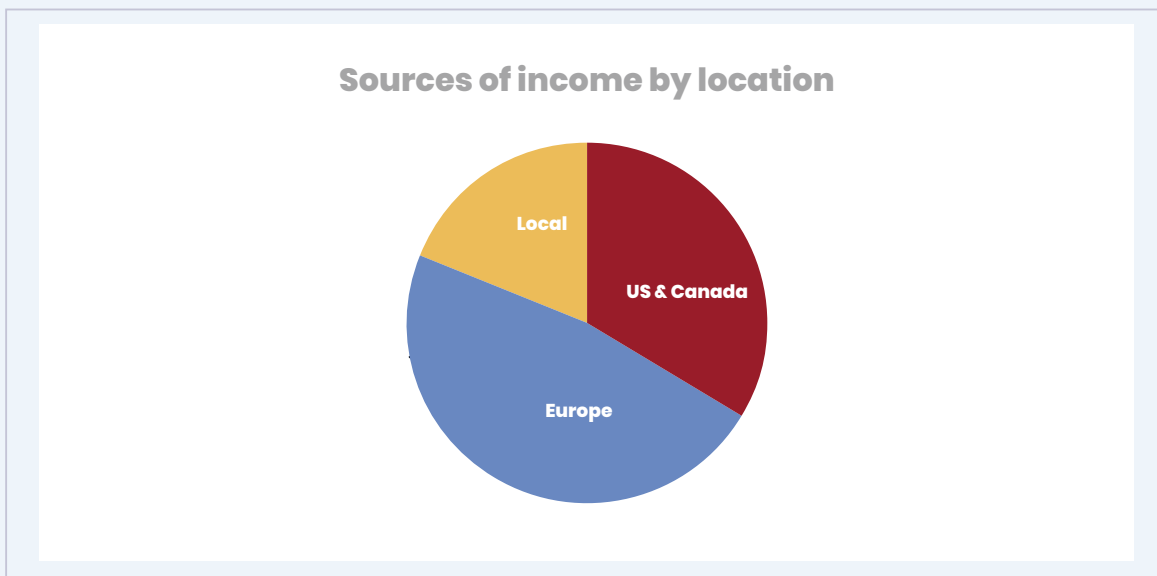
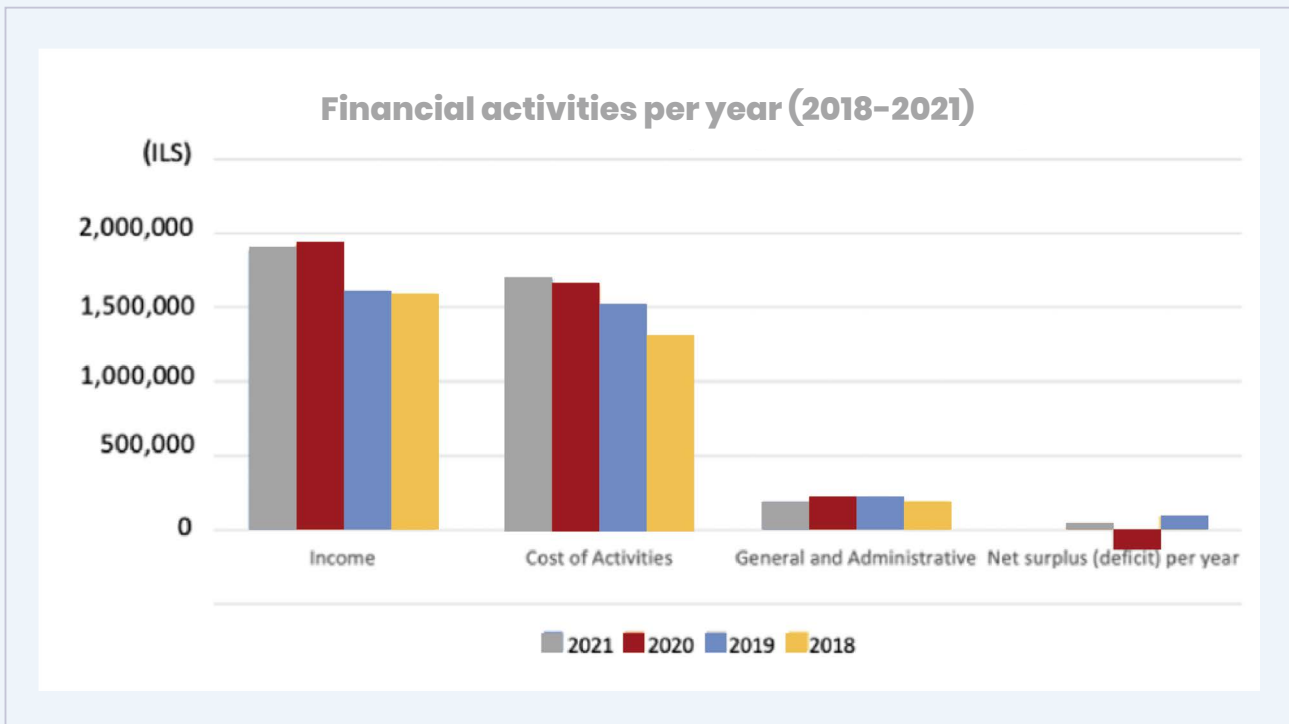
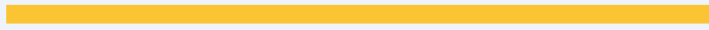
Paving the way for the 2023 municipal elections

Two of the groups from Kayan's women in leadership project have already determined that they will participate in the 2023 municipal elections by running workshops and trainings for prospective women candidates in their villages. Kayan has big plans for this project in 2022, including expanding our capacity to empower women in politics and leadership with knowledge, tools, and training and appealing to women through a national-level campaign.

Legal empowerment and access to justice

In 2022, Kayan plans to continue publishing the data we are collecting in order to hold state institutions accountable. We will also work with social workers in order to spread awareness of the signs and risk factors of violence and femicide, in the hopes of eliminating these tragic crimes.

Financial Report



How to Support Kayan

Donations from generous supporters are crucial in helping us further our mission and vision of creating a secure and just society free of gender-based discrimination. Please consider making a gift to Kayan Feminist Organization in one of the following ways:

Bank Transfer

The First International Bank of Israel
#31 Branch #007
Account #105-552836
Komoi 1, Ziv Center Haifa, Israel

Credit or Debit Card

PayPal is a fast, secure way to donate to Kayan. For one-time or monthly donations, please visit our website at:

www.kayanfeminist.org/donate

GlobalGiving is another fast, secure way to donate to individual projects at Kayan. For one-time or monthly donations, please visit: <https://www.globalgiving.org/donate/26365/kayan-feminist-organization/>

American, Canadian, and European donors can also make a tax-deductible contribution online through the New Israel Fund at:

<https://secure.nif.org/onlineactions/g94CeIEoiE-dvjc3gy-zqA2>

Check

Tax-deductible contributions by check can be made payable to “New Israel Fund” and marked as donor-advised to Kayan in the memo line. The checks can be mailed to the following addresses:

US donors: New Israel Fund, PO Box 703358 Philadelphia, PA 19176-0358

Canadian donors: New Israel Fund, 801 Eglinton Ave. West, Suite 401, Toronto, Ontario, M5N 1E3

European donors: New Israel Fund, St. James House, 10 Rosebery Ave., London, EC15 4TD

For more information, or for general inquiries, please contact us at:

info@kayanf.org

With Thanks to Our Supporters





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