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Press Release

60 percent of Arab women murdered in 2020 had previously filed complaints with the Israeli police

Despite submission of a Freedom of Information petition, Israeli police and prosecutors still refuse to provide adequate data related to murder cases of Arab women

Over the past five years (2015-2020), 73 Arab women have been murdered in Israel. In 2020, 60 percent of murdered women had previously filed complaints with the Israeli police about violence they had been experiencing. This information has come from data provided by the police as part of its response to a Freedom of Information petition submitted by Kayan – Feminist Organization, through Advocate Abeer Baker, to the police and the Ministry of Justice.

The police and Ministry of Justice had initially refused to provide information to Kayan in a request submitted under the Freedom of Information Law outside of the number of “non-Jewish” women murdered from 2013 to 2020, in addition to the type of murder weapon used. In response to Kayan’s petition to the district court in Jerusalem, the respondents have released additional data related to murders committed between 2015-2020. In this time period, 73 Arab women were murdered; of these, 23 percent were murdered by their spouses, while the rest were murdered for unspecified motives. According to the data, in over one-third of these cases, the women had filed complaints with the police about violence they had been experiencing even before the murder was committed. The percentage of women that had filed complaints rose to 50 percent of femicides in 2019, and 60 percent in 2020. Despite this increase in the number of complaints filed, the police were unable to provide them with protection, and these women were murdered.

The data also shows that 45 percent of the murders were committed with firearms, indicating the danger of illegal weapons in Arab society, including to women. In 30 percent of cases, women were killed by severe violence. In total, only 34 indictments were made in all of these cases. Despite the Freedom of Information petition, the respondents did not provide any details on any verdicts or sentences.

Police and prosecutors still refuse to provide information on many other unanswered questions, such as the number of cases in which family members who were suspects were investigated and arrested; the number of cases in which friends or acquaintances were investigated and arrested; the stages of case investigation; and the charges of which each defendant was convicted. The police also refused to provide information related to the number of restraining orders that had been previously issued, or the extent of their validity. The police and Ministry of Justice both claimed a lack of staff capacity to take the time required to access the requested data. Although technically this is legal under the Freedom of Information Law, Kayan sees this as a poor excuse to evade responsibility, as according to

the estimated hours needed to obtain the data given by the police and Ministry of Justice, only one full-time staff person would be needed for one-and-a-half months to source this data – a reasonable amount of time to dedicate to the pursuit of justice.

This research began in February 2020, when Kayan approached the police with a table of 58 names of Arab women murdered between 2015-2020, along with 21 questions related to both these specific cases as well as generally related to the phenomenon of femicide. As stated above, after the police and prosecutors refused to provide most of the data requested, Kayan submitted a petition to the district court in Jerusalem in order to obligate the authorities to provide this information under the Freedom of Information Law.

Kayan stated:

Although the petition has resulted in additional data that had not been provided before the filing, the petitioner sees no reason to retract its remaining requests. The respondents have refused to provide material information, including the identity of the suspects. It is of paramount public importance to disclose the requested information, as well as for the authorities to take responsibility for their actions and failure to prevent the murder of these women. Therefore, Kayan finds no reason to withdraw its request for the requested information in full.

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