



After years of withholding information from the public on murders of Arab women,

## **Ministry of Justice discloses details on the legal status regarding 18 murder cases to Kayan**

**\*Of 17 cases, 6 cases related to the murder of 7 Arab women have not been solved, and the cases were closed without indictments\***; in plea bargains with the prosecuting authorities, charges were commuted from first-degree murder to manslaughter\*

The Ministry of Justice recently provided Kayan – Feminist Organization initial details on 17 murder cases of Arab Palestinian women who were murdered between 2013 and 2018. This comes after a Freedom of Information request was submitted to the police and to the Ministry of Justice by the NGO more than a year and a half ago. The request petitioned the legal authorities to provide information on 58 cases of Arab women murdered between 2015 and 2020. The original request was rejected several times under various pretenses. Legal proceedings to obtain more information are currently underway at the Administrative Affairs Court in Jerusalem.

According to the new information the feminist organization has received, out of 17 cases, 6 regarding the murder of 7 women have never been solved and have been closed without an indictment. 5 cases are still respectively under a gagging order, or the legal proceedings are being held behind closed doors and therefore no information has been provided regarding them. This is despite the fact that the case details and the results of the legal proceedings concerning them have received widespread press coverage including direct quotes from press releases issued by the law enforcement authorities. For this reason, the continued withholding of the information from the public cannot be understood as consistent.

Furthermore, the information obtained reveals that the convicted murderers were given reduced sentences and how, as part of plea bargains, the charges were converted from murder to manslaughter. Thus, for example, in one of the cases, as part of a plea bargain, a man that had been charged with the murder of his daughter was sentenced to only 30 months behind bars after the prosecution announced it would not be able to prove “beyond reasonable doubt” that he was indeed his daughter’s murderer. The murder charge was commuted to aiding and abetting after the fact, despite the fact that it appears from media reports that that same person apparently is in possession of information as to the true identity of the murderer but refuses to disclose it. No other person has been indicted for murder in this case.



Rafah Anabtawi, General director of the non-profit, Kayan, says: “We are not satisfied with the scant information we have so far received from the police and from the Ministry of Justice. It has been over one and a half years since we filed our application with these institutions for the first time as required by the Freedom of Information Law. We sought information about 58 murder cases of Arab women; we have been provided with only very partial information. An administrative petition we submitted on the matter is pending in the courts, **and the hearing is expected in late October**. The information we have received so far indicates the police’s ineffectiveness in dealing with the murder of women in Arab society. This is evident in the fact that even when cases are solved and indictments are filed, the prosecution rushes into plea bargains including reduced charges and relatively lenient punishment. It is of the most critical public importance that the information be exposed, in order for the authorities to be held to account for their conduct regarding women’s murders and also in order to drum home the message that Arab women’s blood does not get spilt in vain”.

This freedom of information request made in February 2020 when Kayan delivered a paper containing 58 names of Arab women who were murdered between 2015 and 2020. The paper included 21 specific and general questions. Initially the police and the Ministry of Justice refused to provide most of the data under the pretext that this information might harm the victimized women’s right to privacy and that, regarding part of the information they had been requested to provide, they did not have the resources to search for it. Only recently did Kayan receive partial information shows that 60% of Arab women murdered in 2020 had filed complaints with the police alleging violence toward them prior to their murders.

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