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## Factsheet

# QUARANTINE IMPACT ON GBV IN THE GAZA STRIP

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# INTRODUCTION

Many studies and international institutions assert that gender based violence (GBV) has been increased since the lockdown and quarantine procedures were imposed around the world to face the outbreak of Corona virus. They attributed this increase to the fact that victims of GBV have to stay longer time with their victimizers. Moreover, GBV always increases in the communities which suffer disasters such as armed conflicts, economic crises, or natural disasters, especially the communities where the culture of women inferiority prevailing and where violence against women is justified.<sup>01</sup>

The CEDAW Committee defines GBV in its general comment NO (19) as: "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty."<sup>02</sup>

In the Palestinian context, inferior culture and attitudes against women prevail in the Gaza Strip. Thus, it constitutes fertilized atmosphere for GBV against women in crises, including the outbreak of covid-19 crisis. Many international and national institutions asserted that the GBV rates increased in wake of procedures taken to contain the outbreak of corona virus, especially quarantine.<sup>03</sup>

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<sup>01</sup> UNDP Brief, Gender-Based-Violence and Covid-19, (2020) < file:///C:/Users/m.abu.hashim/Downloads/undp-gender-GBV\_and\_COVID-19.pdf>

<sup>02</sup> General recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 19 (11th session, 1992).  
<<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>>

According to the last violence statistics in 2019, 4 of 10 women face husband violence in the Gaza Strip. Married women or previously married women (1864- years) who sustained at least one sort of violence by their husband is 37,5%, of which 63,5% faced psychological violence, 26,4% faced physical violence, 10,6% faced sexual violence.<sup>04</sup>

According to a survey executed by Ministry of Women Affairs, GBV rates have been increased since the outbreak of Corona virus in Palestine. According to the survey, 55% of women in Palestine suffered from psychological violence, 54% faced economic violence, 47% sought for family protection during the pandemic, 24% suffered verbal violence, 15% sustain physical violence, and 11% faced sexual harassment. Among women with disabilities, violence rates reaches 88%, including physical, psychological, economic, and social violence. It is notable that GBV rates in the Gaza Strip is higher than the West Bank, especially against female teens. According to the up-mentioned survey, violence against children during the pandemic reaches 22,7% in the Gaza Strip, while it is 9,3% in the West Bank.<sup>05</sup>

State of Palestine has obligation to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls according to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of discrimination against women of 1979 and the convention on the Rights of Child of 1989. Both the general recommendations NO 12 and 19 issued by CEDAW Committee assert such obligation according to articles (2, 5, 11, 12, 16) of the convention. Moreover, article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Child clearly asserted states obligation to protect children from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.." Palestine is an acceding state to both conventions since April 2014.<sup>06</sup>

Hereinafter, this factsheet provides facts about GBV under quarantine in homes and centers,<sup>07</sup> based on secondary and primary data. The primary data were collected via a survey filled by random sample of 202 women from the Gaza Strip five Governances. Those women constitute representative sample for 400 women who benefit from psychological, legal, and/or social services provided by Aisha Association for Women and Child Protection in isolation centers and home quarantine. The sample size was defined by confidence level of 95% and margin of error of 0,05. The information in this paper also was collected from interviews with competent ministries and expertise. The secondary information was gathered from reports and official websites.

## **FACTS ABOUT GBV AGAINST WOMEN UNDER QUARANTINE IN THE GAZA STRIP**

- 73,7% of surveyed women asserted that GBV increased under quarantine in comparative with else days. This increase could be attributed to the existence of GBV victims with their victimizers for a longer time, in addition to economic pressure due to lockdown, which in turn increases stress and violence within family where the most vulnerable members in the family, women and children, suffer the most.
- 49% of surveyed women sustained physical violence (battery, injury, pushing) during home quarantine for at least one time by a family male member. 27,7% of surveyed women suffered from physical violence during their existence in isolation centers.

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<sup>03</sup> أخبار الأمم المتحدة، هيئة الزيان: أزمة كورونا زادت من العنف الأسري ضد النساء والفتيات في فلسطين، نشر بتاريخ 3 يوليو 2020

<<https://news.un.org/ar/story/2020:1057572/07/> OCHA, A crisis within a crisis: fighting Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during COVID-19 <

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/crisis-within-crisis-fighting-gender-based-violence-gbv-during-covid-19>>: Palestinian Center for Human Rights, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, PCHR Warns of Increased Violence Against Women and Girls Amidst Coronavirus Pandemic in oPt. published in 25 November 2020

<<https://www.pchrgaza.org/en/international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women-pchr-warns-of-increased-violence-against-women-and-girls-amidst-coronavirus-pandemic-in-opt/>>

<sup>04</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Preliminary Results of the Violence Survey in the Palestinian Society, 2019 <<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2480.pdf>>

<sup>05</sup> The Civic and Women Coalition for the Implementation of CEDAW in the Occupied State of Palestine, Report on the Violence against Women and girls during COVID-19 in the State of Palestine, Submitted to: The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women <<https://www.hwc-pal.org/files/server/Publications/VAW%20report-%20English%20version.pdf>>

■ 60,8% of surveyed women were subject to psychological violence during home quarantine for once at least, as 74,4% suffered cursing, 54,5% suffered threats of beating or expelling, 45% suffered severe blame because a family member infected by the pandemic, 97,2% sustained extra chores and responsibilities during the quarantine, 68,8% suffered from husband and sons irritability, 69,3% endured carelessness by the breadwinner, 47,5% suffered from fear as the breadwinner crash house furniture or other stuff, and 57,4% face inferior treatment. On the other hand, 33,9% of the surveyed women suffered from psychological violence during their stay in isolation centers, as 37,1% suffered cursing and 30,7% faced threat.

■ 25,2% of surveyed women faced sexual violence at least for once, as 55% were deprived from their essential feminine needs during home quarantine, 10,9% suffered from non-husband molestation.

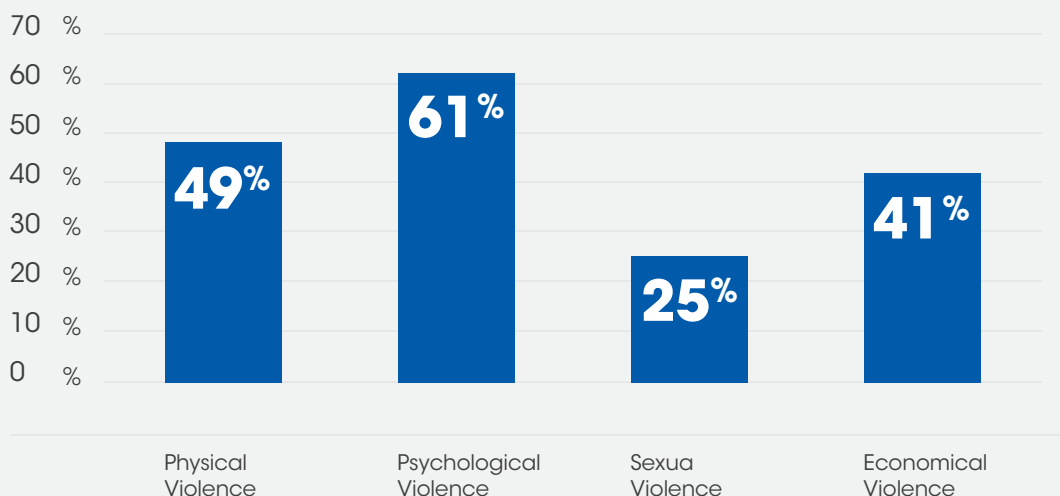
■ 40,7 of surveyed women suffered from economic violence during home quarantine at least for once, as 61,4% sustained lack of expenditure and severe finance scrutiny by the breadwinner, 30,7% their money were taken by the breadwinner without their permission, 27,2% were deprived from doing their job on the internet during quarantine, 43,6% were arbitrary deprived from their essential needs.

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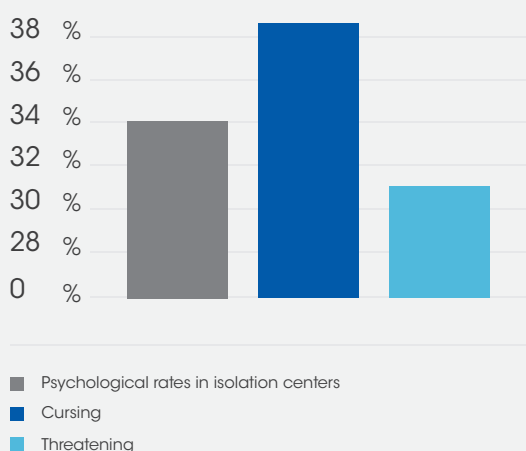
<sup>06</sup> CEDAW committee is the committee responsible, according to convention itself, to oversight states' commitment to the convention. For that sake, and as one of its mechanisms, it issues general recommendations to explain state obligation according to the articles of the convention to help state parties in applying them.

<sup>07</sup> Gaza authorities have used isolation centers and home quarantine to slowdown the outbreak of the pandemic. Isolation centers are schools, hotels, and other premises prepared and allocated for isolating predictable infected people since March. All those who re-enter the Gaza Strip from abroad have to stay two weeks in them. When authorities disclose the outbreak of the pandemic within the Gaza strip in August, infected people and those who mixed with them were put in those centers. Lockdown was, also, imposed for more than three weeks in some areas. After the number of infected people increased, the authorities used home quarantine. Lockdown is gradually untightened in September until recently, in December, it is tightened again as the pandemic surges.

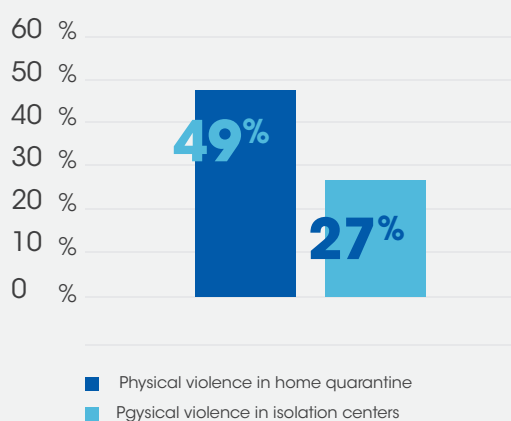
**Diagram 1 Rates of GBV during home quarantine**



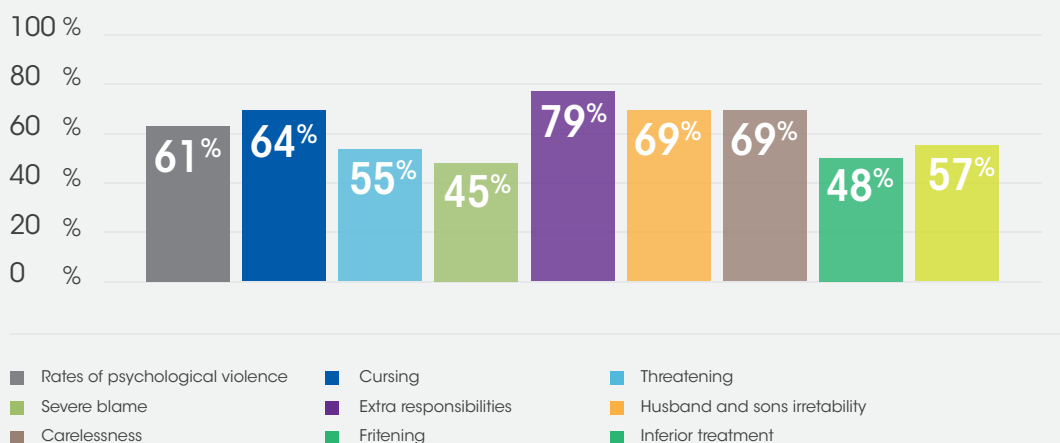
**Diagram 2 Rates of Psychological Violence in Isolation Centers**



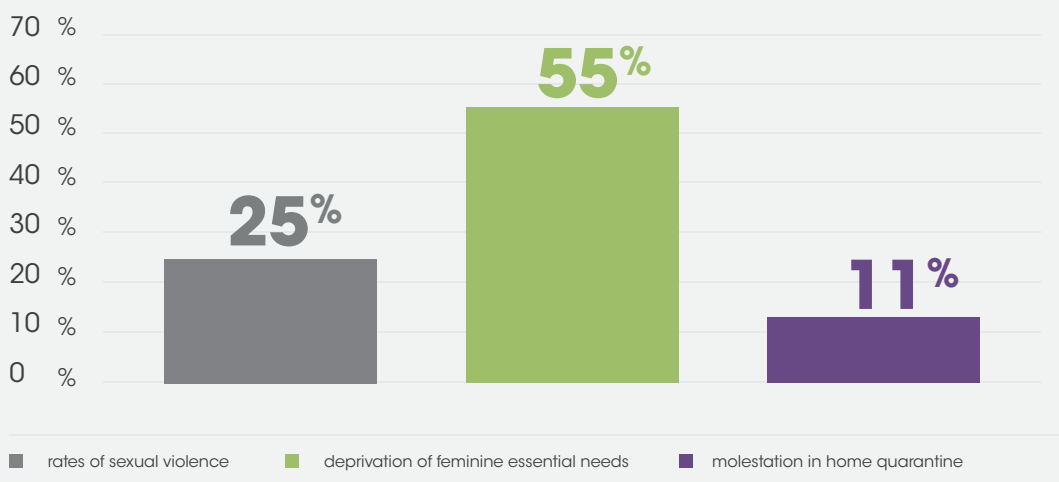
**Diagram 3 Rates of physical Violence in Quarantine Centers**



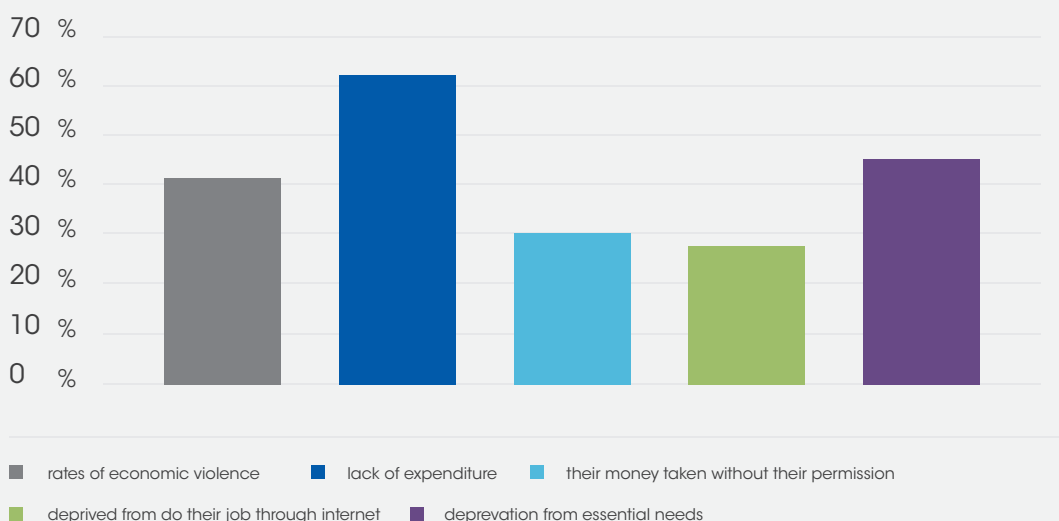
**Diagram 4 Rates of psychological violence during home quarantine**



**Diagram 5 Rates of sexual violence in isolation centers home quarantine**



**Diagram 6 Rates of economic violence during home quarantine**



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- The sole governmental safe house for women in the Gaza Strip had stopped its services twice during the pandemic. The first time, starts on 23 March 2020, after the declaration of the state of emergency. It resumed its services under the pressure of need and demands from NGOs on 5 April 2020. Moreover, the safe house was shut down on 27 August 2020, after the outbreak of Corona virus in the Gaza Strip. Six inmates who were there relocated to other temporary places. However, under the pressure of need, the safe house was reopened on 10 September 2020. Once it was reopened, it received 18 victims of violence.<sup>09</sup> An increase of victims resorting to the safe house for consultancy or accommodation services is noticed, which include victims of severe physical violence such as, burning, injuring, molestation, and ill-treatment.<sup>10</sup>

- The Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip has had no specific plan to tackle GBV during lockdown and quarantine to face Covid-19 pandemic. The Ministry tackle this phenomenon within its general emergency plan. The Ministry provided medical, psychological, and family-guidance services during the lockdown and quarantine through free hotline (103) launched in May 2020. The ministry also coordinates with other institutions and NGOs to provide legal and accommodation services.<sup>11</sup>

- The Ministry of Social Development in the Gaza Strip has had no specific plan to tackle GBV during lockdown and quarantine to face Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Ministry asserted that all the institutions that provide economic, psychological, and family guidance services work under the ministry supervision.<sup>12</sup>



- The police in the Gaza Strip has had no specific plan to tackle GBV during lockdown and quarantine. The Family and Childhood Unit in Police Public Relation Department dealt with the GBV within its general emergency plan set since the dislockdown of pandemic outbreak in the Gaza Strip. The unite has provided help and guidance for victims in cooperation with other ministries and NGOs.<sup>13</sup>
- The civil court, sharia courts, and general prosecution's work have been suspended for various periods under the procedures that imposed to face Corona virus pandemic in the Gaza Strip. The civil courts' have been suspended from 23 March to 30 May 2020, and from 24 August to 24 September 2020. The sharia courts also suspended its work from 25 March to 20 "April, and from 25 August to 18 October 2020. The General Prosecution's work has been suspended from 16 March until the beginning of June, and from 25 August to 24 September 2020. This work suspension of such vital governmental facilities which responsible for providing protection for GBV victims by providing justice and victimizers accountability, leaded to more violence as victims of GBV became without legal protection.<sup>14</sup>

NGOs in the Gaza strip work on filling the gap of protection left by the state of emergency plan which lack gender mainstream. Many NGOs participated in providing support for victims of GBV under the quarantine and lockdown procedures. For example, Aisha Association for Women and Child Protection was the first to respond to such protection for victims of GBV via two initiatives, the first is: "Back to Home initiative", which provided help for women in isolation centers. The second is: "Your Commitment is Your Shelter Initiative" which provided help for women under home quarantine. The provided help includes psychological, legal, social, and relief services. The initiative of "Your Commitment is Your Shelter" launched a free hotline (1800170171) since September 2020, which has played as a safeguard for women suffer violence. Aisha association and other NGOs such as Mezan Center for Human Rights, Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Culture and free thought Association serve as a focal point between victims of GBV and the competent authorities under the state of emergency.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>08</sup> The Civic and Women Coalition for the Implementation of CEDAW in the Occupied State of Palestine, Report on the Violence against Women and girls during COVID-19 in the State of Palestine, Submitted to: The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women <  
<https://www.hwc-pal.org/files/server/Publications/VAW%20report-%20English%20version.pdf>>

<sup>09</sup> Palestinian Center for Human rights, press releases, In light of Coronavirus Pandemic, PCHR Expresses Concern at Deterioration of Women's Conditions in Gaza Strip, published on 25 September 2020 <  
<https://www.pchrgaza.org/en/in-light-of-coronavirus-pandemic-pchr-expresses-concern-at-deterioration-of-womens-conditions-in-gaza-strip/>>

<sup>10</sup> Interview through phone with Soad Qneta, executive manager of the Safe House, conducted on 22 December 2020

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Maha Amamy, manager of Woman Health Department in the Ministry of Health, and interview with Mona Sakakini, Head of the Mental Health and Family Guidance Department in the Ministry of Health, conducted on 20 September 2020

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Roba Betar, Protection Supervisor in the Social Development Ministry, conducted on 20 December 2020

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mariam Nauwq, Manager of Family and Childhood Unit Attached to Police Public Relation Department, conducted on 20 December 2020

<sup>14</sup> Interviews with Lawyers in Aisha Association for Women and Child Protection, conducted on 28 December 2020

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Ream Frenah, Executive Manager of the Aisha Association for Women and Child Protection, conducted on 27 December 2020

## DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Japan, UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.