

Women, Gender and Gun Violence in the Middle East



By Rebecca Gerome
IANSA Women's Network
October 2011



Acknowledgements

Sarah Masters, Marta Pietrobelli, Widad Akrawi, Mona Makhamreh, Lubna Dawany, Vanessa Farr, Sally Gerome, Hanan Abu Ghoush, Kifah Manasra, Hadeel Abdo, Abeer Dababneh, Fadi Abi Allam, Laura Sfeir, Olfat Mahmoud, Raghida Ghamlouch, Lamis Nasser, Layla Hammarneh, Stephanie Chaban, Amal Khreishneh, Anne Claire Yaesh, Abeer Rizeq Zayyad and Suad Shtiwi.

Thank you to all of the women who have contributed a wealth of information to the report but remain anonymous.

Thank you to colleagues at the IANSA Secretariat for their support.

About the IANSA Women's Network

The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) is the global network of civil society organisations working in over 100 countries to stop the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW). The IANSA Women's Network is the only international network focused on the links between gender, women's rights, small arms and armed violence. It aims to make visible the disproportionate damage that women suffer from the availability and misuse of guns, raise the profile of the gender issue in the small arms debate and support women's organisations to reduce gun violence in their communities.

Cover Photograph by Rebecca Gerome, Gaza, January 2011.

First published by the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) in October 2011.

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Original language: English

International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

54-64 Leonard Street
London EC2A 4JT
United Kingdom
www.iansa.org

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Executive Summary

This report presents the main findings of an assessment conducted in Lebanon, Jordan and Occupied Palestinian Territory¹ from January to May 2011 by providing a situation overview, challenges and entry points for action in each country and presenting recommendations for future interventions.

Although the impact of gun violence on women in the region has remained largely invisible, the proliferation of small arms has prevented women from exercising some of their most basic rights. Direct and indirect impacts of small arms on women in the Middle East include armed domestic violence and “crimes committed in the name of honour”, as well as long term social, economic and psychological effects of revenge killings between male family members, tribal vendettas and celebratory shootings resulting in death and serious injury. Women who have been injured are considered an added burden on the family, and in some cases they are marginalised and rejected by their family. When a woman loses her husband to gun violence, she must struggle to provide for family members.

Women’s groups have already been working hard on violence against women, but what challenges have prevented women’s groups from engaging with the issue of small arms? Small arms control and disarmament is a sensitive, sometimes taboo, issue that is difficult to address without seeming to take sides politically. Currently there is no consolidated data on either firearm use or violence against women, making the problem hard to assess. Varying notions of crime and punishment throughout the region complicate the issue. Private justice is often considered legitimate, especially where institutions are weak, and such incidents are not always officially reported. Laws to protect women’s rights are either not sufficiently developed or not sufficiently implemented. Laws still exist to pardon and give reduced penalties for “crimes committed in the name of honour”.

Women’s groups have expressed readiness to work on small arms control and disarmament, and have identified opportunities for action. These differ in each the three countries examined. For women’s rights and civil society organisations in Lebanon, the best way to tackle the problem is to present small arms control as a protection issue rather than a political one. This means looking at it from the angle of protecting women rather than disarming one group over another. In Jordan, where authorities are desperate to control civilian gun possession, women identified UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) as a starting point for action. In Occupied Palestinian Territory, women can work with the Palestinian Authority to improve law enforcement in the West Bank and raise awareness among youth to break the links between masculinity, guns and violence.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen and develop research and data collection at all levels

Women interviewed as part of the needs assessment repeatedly identified the need for consolidated data on the links between small arms, gender and violence against women in the region, as this currently does not exist. To address this gap in information, it is essential to collect gender, age and region- disaggregated data on perceptions of guns and security, and undertake an analysis of related laws, forensic data and court decisions in each country. The results of the research should serve as a basis for training and advocacy activities, as well as a tool for formulating public policies on small arms control.

2. Build women’s capacity to influence policy and support them to lead their own trainings

During the needs assessment, women expressed the need for training on small arms control issues, as well as a strong interest in leading trainings and awareness-raising sessions themselves, both in their communities and with local authorities.

3. Support women’s advocacy and campaigning efforts on small arms and disarmament

All the women who took part in the needs assessment expressed an interest in increased opportunities for advocacy and campaigning at all levels.

4. Build networks of women working on small arms control

Such opportunities would help women develop strategies for action (especially in relation to establishing national action plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325), and exchange ideas about how to deal with the sensitive issue of small arms and their gendered impacts.

Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based on visits to women’s community organisations, NGOs and women’s shelters, literature review and media monitoring (see annex 1 for references), informal interviews with practitioners, survivors, academics, lawyers, social workers and activists in Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan and Lebanon from January to May 2001 (see annex 2 for complete interview schedule) and focus group discussions (see annex 3).

Small arms and gender in the Middle East

Recognition of the gendered nature of armed violence must inform policy and programmatic responses. If the gendered aspects of armed violence — including the male social roles that often shape armed violence and the structural subordination of women and girls in larger society — are not addressed, some of the key root causes of armed violence and its various impacts on girls, boys, women and men might be neglected. – UN Secretary General Report on Small Arms to the UN Security Council, April 2011

The Middle East is the largest arms market in the developing world.² There are an estimated 50-90 million small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the region, of which 80% are in the hands of the civilian population.³ Major producers of SALW and ammunition include Turkey, Israel, Iran and Egypt. All countries in the region have stocks of SALW and ammunition, and very little is known about what happens with surplus weapons.⁴

Throughout the world, gun possession and use is often associated with violent masculine gun culture, exacerbated in times of war and conflict.⁵ While men are the overwhelming majority of gun users as well as direct victims of gun injury and death, women suffer more invisible effects of gun violence. This includes the long-term psychological, sociological and economic impact of losing a male breadwinner as well as direct violence at gunpoint. Often, the highest risk for women is in their own home, where they may be shot or, more often, threatened, harassed, subjugated or raped at gunpoint. This type of violence remains invisible because women are reluctant to seek help, fearing grave repercussions if they speak out, and often, violence against women in the home is seen as a private matter. To a certain degree, violence against women in the home is also considered as a “normal” part of the relationship between women and men. In

conflict zones, women are often the target of sexual violence and rape at gunpoint, by state and non-state armed groups.⁶

What impact does the proliferation of SALW have on women in the Middle East? What challenges have prevented women’s groups from engaging with the issue of SALW? How can women play a role in combating the proliferation of SALW in the region?

This report presents the main findings of an assessment conducted in Lebanon, Jordan and Occupied Palestinian Territory from January to May 2011 by providing a snapshot of the situation in each country, followed by the challenges and entry points for action and ending with policy recommendations. The paper refers to small arms and disarmament broadly and uses the terms small arms, guns and firearms interchangeably.

While the context in each country varies widely, there are several key regional trends in gun possession and use.

Traditional Arab tribal structures, guns and masculinity

Throughout the region, traditional Arab tribal structures associate guns with masculinity and honour. Tribes are known to have traditionally lived with small arms for self-defence purposes. Possession of small arms represents an element of pride in the Bedouin culture. It is common for men and boys to fire live bullets in the air as an expression of extreme happiness, at weddings and other celebrations, which in turn has contributed to a positive association with small arms.

Interviews⁷ and several studies⁸ reveal that gun possession and use fits into a larger conflict management and informal justice system presided over by elder males in the family, clan or tribe. Gun violence between two individuals affects the entire groups that they belong to. A male member’s death or injury is considered an offence against the entire group, and members of the perpetrator’s group must pay the consequences. Negotiations among the elders of the offending and victimised groups are required, often involving monetary compensation. Wars of revenge may result, if other recourse cannot be found. These types of systems are widely shared among the majority of ethnic groups in the region, irrespective of religion, and political affiliations.

A workshop organised in Amman in 2002 concluded that guns “symbolise and protect the male’s role and the rightness of male and female actions” and gun use in the Middle East is “gender and age specific: males hold and use the weapons, women’s involvement as users or as victims is severely limited, [although] in the case of honour crimes and fatal accidents caused by the misuse of weapons during public occasions, women are more often the victims. (...) Boys’ passage to manhood is linked specifically to weapons possession and use.”⁹ As in other parts of the world, the highest risk for women in the Middle East is often in the home, as small arms are used to reinforce the patriarchy and men’s control over the sexuality and reproductive abilities of female family members.

Regional politics, armed resistance and the Arab Spring

Recent history of conflict and resistance, mainly in Occupied Palestinian Territory and Lebanon, has also contributed to the proliferation of small arms and to their positive image, as many see armed resistance as legitimate.

While the recent conflicts in Libya and Syria have dramatically fuelled the proliferation of small arms in the region, the recent ‘Arab Spring’ has also raised several important questions about the legitimacy of gun possession and use. On the one hand, many of the women interviewed in this study saw the uprisings as an important lesson showing that armed violence is not necessary to achieve justice. In Egypt and Tunisia, militarised regimes confronted non-violent movements where women and men were aligned for the first time, while in Syria and Libya, armed conflict continued endlessly and resulted in a large number of deaths:

“The recent revolutions show that peaceful protest can be more efficient. In Egypt, the people in the streets were unarmed. Women joined in. They won fast. In Libya they were armed, and the conflict is drawn out, never-ending.” – Interview, Palestinian Women Humanitarian Organisation, Bourj Al Barajneh Camp, Beirut, Lebanon, May 2011

The cases of forced virginity tests in Egypt and rapes at gunpoint against female opponents in Libya also pointed to the lack of democratic and fair policing systems and the specific targeting of women by state forces. The hope is that the recent uprisings have opened a space for women to voice opposition, promote peace education and an alternative, gender-responsive form of institutional security.

Gender-based violence severe and underreported

Studies show that domestic violence, especially intimate partner violence, is one of the most prevalent forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) against women in the region. Statistics likely underestimate the extent of GBV.¹⁰ Most women do not seek help,

Lebanon



and if they do, most go to their own family members, friends, and the family members of the abuser for intervention and support. Very few seek help from public institutions such as the police, courts, or social services.¹¹ Women and girls who speak out are often blamed for the violence inflicted upon them, and their families are shamed for not exerting greater control over their sexuality.¹²

These issues will be further explored in the following chapters on Lebanon, Jordan and Occupied Palestinian Territory. Considering the scope of the issues, the following report does not attempt to be comprehensive and gives only succinct background information about each country situation.

Context

“The front door of Abu Rida’s cramped workshop bursts open and three young men enter, one of them hopping on one foot because of a bullet wound. Minutes earlier, they had been involved in a gun battle with a rival gang in a nearby district. They ask Abu Rida for ammunition for their pistols, including a Russian Tokarev automatic.”¹³

This excerpt from a May 2011 article in Time Magazine, describing a scene in a Beirut gun shop, highlights the age and gender dimensions of gun violence and the demand for small arms in Lebanon.

Guns: cheap, widely available and part of every day life

The rate of private gun ownership in Lebanon is estimated at 21.0 firearms per 100 people.¹⁴ Interviews reveal that most households possess at least one firearm, whatever the religion, denomination or social status of the individual. Lebanon shares with its neighbours the view that possession of arms represents manhood. In the region of Ba’albek and Mount Lebanon, Lebanese people still exclaim, “We have increased by one gun” when a baby boy is born. Sometimes a rifle is given to a baby boy as a gift at birth. Lebanese law legitimises the carrying and trading of arms, under the legislative decree No. 137 issued in 1959. Furthermore, Lebanese authorities issue licenses very easily.¹⁵

In a survey conducted in 2005 with youth aged 20-35 by the Permanent Peace Movement, 90.6% of respondents felt that there are a lot of weapons in

their communities. 37.5% respondents possessed at least one weapon. Of these, 22% possessed more than three guns. “Guns have so much become part of the societal culture that people do not feel that holding weapons is either a crime or a dangerous choice. The culture of violence and war (...) is still rooted in the subconscious of many Lebanese people.” Focus group participants agreed that “all kinds of small arms can be found in Lebanese society” explaining their proliferation by Lebanon’s history and the lack of SALW collection efforts.¹⁶ In 2011, women’s organisations reported that disarmament efforts had been incomplete.

“In Lebanon, as every house has guns, it’s not a priority policy issue. There is a license system, but people can get licenses very easily. The disarmament process after the war was incomplete and did not include everyone.” – Interview, YWCA-Beirut, March 2011

The Syrian context and recent upsurge in the proliferation of small arms

Regional politics have a big influence on the demand for SALW in Lebanon. Demand has been growing steadily over the past months with the influx of Syrian refugees. Several reports point to a recent “arms selling frenzy” as black-market arms dealers in Lebanon find themselves overwhelmed by Syrians looking either to protect their families, or to shoot back at the security forces sent to squash the rebellion against

President Bashar al-Assad.¹⁷ Lebanese residents, fearing Syria's wave of violence may spread, have also started to buy small arms and light weapons.¹⁸ In just a few months, the price of an AK-47 assault rifle in Beirut increased from 850 dollars to 1,450; while an M4, sold previously for 5,800 dollars, now costs 7,500 dollars. The price of a Kalashnikov, which varied between 1,000 dollars to 1,200 dollars only a few months ago, is now being sold for 1,600 dollars in Beirut and 2,000 dollars in Tripoli.¹⁹

According to Time Magazine²⁰, in Tripoli and Northern Lebanon, large quantities of weapons were shipped in May 2011. Although their provenance and destination are unknown, some believe that these are entering Syria, while others claim that they are going to arm Sunnis and Alawites as tensions increase at the dividing line between the Alawite-populated Jabal Mohsen quarter of Tripoli and the adjacent Sunni district of Bab Tebbaneh.²¹

Small arms and politics

Possession of arms in Lebanon is closely related to political party membership. According to arms dealers interviewed by Al Jazeera in May 2011²², prominent political parties, who use their wide network of allies to protect smugglers from prosecution, control the small arms market.

In Southern Lebanon, the Lebanese resistance movement, Hezbollah, fighting for the liberation of the Shebaa farms area from Israeli occupation, claims that it does not plan to disarm until Israel completely withdraws from the occupied Shebaa farms in the South. The extent of civilian firearm ownership in Southern Lebanon is unknown, but there is evidence that arms flow to non-state groups such as Hezbollah continue despite a 2006 UN Security Council arms embargo.²³

Palestinian Refugee Camps

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon tend to see gun possession as a right for self-defence purposes, pointing to the Sabra-Shatila massacre and the war in the camps in 1985-1986. Guns are also used as a means of celebration in the camps.

In April 2011, the Women's Humanitarian Organisation in the Bourj Al Barajneh camp in Beirut noticed that small arms have become major concern within the camp and pose a large risk to community members. People state that guns and small arms are necessary to protect themselves and their families, especially during times of war. However through informal observation, Women's Humanitarian Organisation noted that there are actually more deaths attributed to accidents caused by small arms, than in times of war.

"In the camps there is no privacy. Families live together. If someone pulls out a gun, it puts everyone in danger. There have been many cases of children playing and killing each other with guns in the home. A four-year-old boy shot his baby sister, and killed her by accident. Recently, people shot each other in the street for 2-3 hours." – Interview, Bourj al Barajneh Camp, Beirut May 2011

Interviewees reported that the main Palestinian political parties pay US\$ 33 (50,000 Lebanese Pounds) to boys of any age, as young as 8 years old, to act as security guards in the camps. Political parties, especially Fatah and Hamas compete for people's allegiance.²⁴

"People are poor and desperate. They come to the office twice a week and get to carry a gun. Guns and money are synonymous to becoming a man. If you have money and a gun, you have power. What worries me most is their attitude towards school and education. They have no right to work anyway, so they think, why should I go to school?" – Interview, Women's Humanitarian Organisation, Beirut, May 2011

In April 2011, Women's Humanitarian Organisation conducted five focus groups with 48 women from the camp to find out their impression regarding small arms in the community. The majority of women, 73%, were against the use of small arms within the home and felt insecure. Another 8% were against the use of small arms but felt it has become necessary for personal use. 16% thought these small arms are often misused. Only 3% felt that small arms are necessary and posed no risk to those around, especially if the owners are well trained. Through discussions, women mentioned that further training and awareness is needed on small arms control. Women expressed the desire to play a role within the camp in regards to small arms control and to be involved in shaping their children opinions regarding the presence and use of small arms.

Women and guns

During the conflict in the 1970s, women began to join various armed groups for the first time in history, but their participation in armed conflict was complicated, according to Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, "That women should man barricades, carry guns, and kill was

unprecedented in Lebanese tradition (...): some families categorically refused to allow their daughters to join the fighting." Women who did join suffered feelings of guilt, anxiety and loneliness. According to Shehadeh, the participation of women sprang from a purely patriotic perspective and had nothing feminist about it.²⁵ After the conflict ended, none of the female combatants joined the army, which had at the time only 600 female recruits, confined mostly to administrative and paramedical tasks.²⁶

"Where Do We Go Now?"²⁷, a recent film by Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki (2011), tells the story of a fictional Lebanese village where Muslim and Christian women work together to keep their husbands, brothers and sons from entering into conflict with each other. One of their strategies is to keep the men's guns hidden. In an interview, Labaki said that the idea came the day she learned she was pregnant, in May 2008. "That day, violence was everywhere in Beirut. That's when I asked myself: If I had a son, what would I do to prevent him from taking a gun and going out into the street? That's where the idea for the film came from. This film is dedicated to mothers. I don't know one woman in Lebanon who hasn't suffered a tragedy related to war".²⁸ Despite some women's participation in armed groups, small arms possession and use continue to be strongly linked to violent masculinity.

The use of guns in "crimes committed in the name of honour" and domestic violence

In a study on "crimes committed in the name of honour" and recorded in Lebanon between 1998-2003, firearms and hunting rifles were the most common weapons cited in the study sample, in 72% of cases.²⁹ In March 2011, the Lebanese Council of Women published an open letter following the murder of a woman by her husband, with a hunting gun.

Case Study

Armed domestic violence

From the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Woman (LECORVAW)

Mrs. Ola suffered from her husband's continued abuse and violence, in all its forms. She was abandoned for months. The violence she suffered took on many different forms, including sexual and psychological violence, severe beatings, hair pulling ... and the **constant threat of weapons**. Her husband kept his guns in a glass closet, placed in the living room, to remind her that he was always ready to shoot and kill her. All this violence took place before the eyes of their only daughter.

She turned to the Listening and Counseling centre of the **Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Woman - LECORVAW** seeking help, legal assistance and guidance. Her daughter suffered severe psychological crisis that necessitated treatment and intervention from the psychotherapist of **LECORVAW**.

As the case required a quick decision, **LECORVAW's** lawyer advised her to complain before the specialised court, with a simultaneous separation process and a request for an accelerated alimony for her and her daughter.

Eight months later, the court ruled that the husband pay a monthly alimony of \$800 for his wife and daughter (one million two hundred thousand Lebanese Pounds). This is considered the largest percentage obtained by a woman referred to this court.

The forensic doctor's report and several key photographs greatly facilitated the court decision. These included photographs proving that she was beaten, as well as photographs proving the existence of a weapon, kept by her husband in the house and used to threaten her.

Hence, women must be aware of the importance of obtaining the documents necessary to support their cases in court. The husband reopened the decision of alimony before the Court of Appeals, and to this day, the case is still pending. But the alimony is still in effect for the benefit of **Mrs. Ola**.

Open Letter, 18 March 2011

The Lebanese Council of Women, with its 170 member associations, severely condemns the crime that was perpetuated by a man who shot his wife with his hunting gun in a farm in the Bikka. The LCW is against this criminal act and insists that a law against violence against women be voted as soon as possible so that women are no longer men's easy victims. We also ask that he be punished so it can serve as a lesson to other men, and so that lives of women are not at the mercy of men.

In focus groups conducted in 2005, participants "discussed the 'culture of violence resulting from the proliferation of small arms. Participants suggested that the, 'Availability of small arms is "increasing levels of crime and violence against women ... increasing the number of crimes committed in the name of honour".³⁰

In one case reported by the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women (LECORVAW), a woman won a court case and managed to obtain separation from her husband by showing pictures of his guns. The case shows the psychological as well as physical impact of guns on women in the home.

Women's groups working with domestic violence victims reported feeling insecure themselves:

"We had a case in Tripoli, where the father came to get his daughter [at our centre]. He had a gun and threatened us through the door. We were scared. We too are victims in those cases. Men come here to find the women we are protecting and threaten us. The government offers us no protection." – Interview, Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Woman (LECORVAW), May 2011

Conflict-related sexual violence at gunpoint

Women's groups reported that the military and armed groups have been known to use guns in rape and other forms of sexual violence. LECORVAW mentioned a case of a girl in Tripoli, who was raped by her father, a soldier, threatening her at gunpoint to force her compliance. In a study on violence against women conducted some weeks after the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, 39% of the participants reported experiencing violence during the conflict, over half of which was in the form of physical violence. In addition to family members, soldiers were also frequently cited as the perpetrators.³¹

Legal framework

Domestic violence is not explicitly covered by the Lebanese penal code. A draft law criminalising domestic abuse was passed by the former cabinet in May 2010, and is currently under review by a special parliamentary committee.

On 4 August 2011, the Lebanese parliament annulled Article 562 of the Criminal Code, which alleviated the sentence of people who claimed they killed or injured their wife, daughter, or other relative to protect the family "honour." Article 562, as it stood before 4 August, stipulated that any person who "surprised" his spouse or one of his descendants in the act of adultery, or in an "illegal" sexual relation, such as a same sex relationship, and kills or injures either party without premeditation, is subject to a shorter prison sentence than he otherwise would receive.³²

This is an encouraging first step, but more needs to be done to protect Lebanese women. In 2008, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) Committee, the United Nations expert body that supervises implementation of the Convention, called upon Lebanon to enact legislation on violence against women, including domestic abuse and marital rape. In Lebanese law, the definition of rape explicitly excludes forced sex in marriage, and the rape of a virgin by means of deception is potentially subject only to a fine (Article 518). If a rapist marries his victim following the crime, the law exonerates him (Article 522).



Challenges and Entry Points for Action

What has prevented women from engaging with the issue of small arms up until now? The links between small arms and politics in Lebanon have made women reluctant to speak out on armed violence and disarmament.

Challenge

■ Gun control: a politically sensitive issue associated with the legitimacy of armed resistance

Especially in southern Lebanon, weapons possession is associated with pride and a symbol of 'rightful resistance'.³³ Consequently domestic criticism of the widespread availability and misuse of weapons is viewed by some as a challenge to the legitimacy of resistance.³⁴ *"In the south, some women carry guns because they perceive it as being their only way to defend themselves. The majority of Lebanese find that armed resistance is legitimate."* – Interview, Lebanese Council of Women, Beirut, March 2011

Furthermore, the terms disarmament and arms control often create an immediate reaction from people who think that they require taking a political stance on disarming Hezbollah or the Palestinian refugees.

"It is complicated to speak out about guns due to the current political climate. Disarmament is very hot issue right now, and taking a stance on this means taking sides, politically." – Interview, YWCA-Beirut, March 2011

In a household survey conducted in Southern Lebanon in 2008, the question, "Are you for or against stricter government control on civilian weapons?" was asked. 49.2 per cent of party supporters either 'did not know' or 'did not care' about this issue. Of the non-party supporters, 28.8 per cent expressed the same sentiments.³⁵ However 16.1% of party supporters and 41.7% non-party supporters were in favour of stricter government control on civilian weapons. This is a significant number considering the context in southern Lebanon and shows that more people are willing to challenge civilian gun possession that would be expected. This study did not contain sex- and age-disaggregated data, which could shed more light on the issue.

Entry point for action

■ Gun violence as a protection issue, not a political issue

In May 2011, LECORVAW organised a focus group with various Lebanese and Palestinian women's groups in Tripoli, northern Lebanon. Despite the sensitive nature of the topic in Lebanese society, participants expressed enthusiasm in developing their capacity and supporting each other to begin working on the issue. They decided that the best entry point is to focus on the use of small arms in acts of violence against women and girls.

In June 2011, LECORVAW organised a round table discussion about "The impact of small arms on women and girls in domestic violence" in Tripoli. Participants included lawyers, university professors, forensic doctors and social activists. Participants agreed to work to reform national laws to effectively protect women against gun violence and fully involve women in peacebuilding activities.

Both Palestinian and Lebanese women have expressed willingness and enthusiasm to work on the issue of gun control, despite its sensitive nature. The challenge is to speak about guns in terms of protecting women, rather than taking sides politically.

"We are not discussing whether Palestinians have the right to have guns or not. As a woman, I won't feel safe to have a gun in my house. Even if it's a sensitive issue, you can still find ways to work on it. And you have to. You can't just keep saying, "can't". When people have a gun, their brain is switched. They will think of using it. People here resolve problems between each other with guns. Maybe we can keep them somewhere, in a security office, locked." – Interview, Women's Humanitarian Organisation, Bourj al Barajneh camp, Beirut

Context

"In all conflicts, when there is a dispute with a neighbour or a brother, men use their guns." – Interview in Amman, March 2011

In Jordan, firearms acquisition and their use during ceremonies increased and became a symbol of tribal power in the absence of a strong state during the reign of the Ottoman Empire to the 19th century. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate continued to strengthen tribal ties. In 1950, Jordan annexed the West Bank of the Jordan River and brought Palestinian representation into the government. Since then, Palestinians have constituted the majority of the population in Jordan, under minority rule. This has heavily influenced politics and perceptions of security in Jordan, and some argue that it may have encouraged the proliferation of small arms. Today, unlike in Lebanon and the OPT where state structures are weak, the traditional conflict system in Jordan is heavily affected by the power of a strong central government, which is both dependent on tribal power and exerts control over it.³⁶

The use of guns in celebrations

The estimated rate of private gun ownership in Jordan is 11.5 firearms per 100 people.³⁷ As in many other Arab countries, guns are used as a portrayal of happiness. It is common for men to express their feelings in public or private occasions by shooting in the air, often in crowded places.³⁸ Many innocent bystanders have been seriously injured or killed by such practices. When men are injured or killed, their

wives must bear the burden of caring for the family. In one such case, Abu Mohammad was shot by accident at a wedding in Madaba. Following the accident, he spent a year in the hospital in Amman and had to have his leg amputated. His wife, Um Mohammad, was left alone to feed and care for her three young children. For a year, she took her children to visit her husband in the hospital, spending several hours on public transportation each day. "It was draining, costly and psychologically difficult", she says.³⁹

Guns and crimes committed in the name of honour

"Gun culture and masculinity are very connected in Jordan. There is a law against using guns, but the difficulty is putting it into force. No one is currently listening to the government. Tribal concepts of masculinity feed into the demand for guns. Most killings of women committed in the name of honour are with guns. If you don't have a gun at home, you're not masculine enough. I see this with my neighbours: if the boy cannot use a gun, he is not a man." – Interview, Arab Women's Organisation, Amman, Jordan, March 2011

Often, small arms are used in cases where the notion of honour is threatened. Although no reliable statistics exist on the issue, experts on crimes committed in the name of honour against women believe that guns are the primary weapons used in the perpetration of

Case Study

Case 1: Crimes committed in the name of honour

From Sisterhood Is Global Institute (SIGI)

these crimes. Public perception can sometimes be considered more important than the life of female family members. According to a survey released in March 2011, Jordanian families are more worried about how they are perceived by their own communities when bringing up their daughters, rather than how existing laws protect their female family members. 80.9% of parents interviewed believe that protecting a girl means protecting the family honour, while 89.1% of parents believe that daughters should obey their brothers.⁴⁰

In September 2011, Amman's criminal court prosecutor charged a man with premeditated murder after he confessed to shooting dead his 24-year-old widowed daughter in hospital after she gave birth to twins in Deir Alla in the Jordan Valley. The suspect is quoted as saying, "I was shocked that she was pregnant. I was enraged and shot her dead because she did something shameful." The woman had been a widow for four years. "The man claimed he wanted to check on the condition of his daughter ... then he shot her in the head," said Ahmad Hwarat, head of the hospital where the killing took place. Women interviewed pointed to the regional proliferation of small arms and availability of guns as an important factor in the perpetration of crimes committed in the name of honour:

"We are in a conflict area, which means there is a large availability of guns. Many of the crimes committed in the name of honour are conducted with pistols." – Interview, Human Forum for Women's Rights, Amman, Jordan, May 2011

Although murder is punishable by death in Jordan, in crimes committed in the name of honour courts can commute or reduce sentences, particularly if the victim's family asks for leniency.⁴¹ Article 98 of the Jordanian penal code allows for lenient treatment of those who commit a crime in a "state of fit or fury" resulting from an unlawful or dangerous act on the

part of the victim. In practice, this provision is often applied to benefit men who commit crimes in the name of honour against women.⁴² Between 15 and 20 such crimes occur in Jordan each year.⁴³

Two cases studies of crimes committed in the name of honour highlight how the availability of small arms undermines women's rights in Jordan. Both cases show ways in which male family members use firearms to control women's lives and sexuality and enforce their own versions of private justice, based on the idea that family honour is sometimes worth more than a woman's life. Furthermore, the cases demonstrate the failures of the current institutional justice system to protect women and enforce women's rights and the importance that private justice continues to play in women's lives.

The following testimony is unique, as the victim survived, but was permanently disabled by the attack. This story highlights the serious consequences of the availability of small arms and their ability to destroy women's lives. The case also shows the failure of the institutional justice system to protect women from gun violence and the central role played by private justice in Jordanian society.

I just turned thirty years old. I cannot move normally and cannot live a normal life.

It all happened when I challenged my family a few years ago. I decided to get a divorce. My husband was much older than me and he was mentally ill. He would beat me and harass me. So I went to Family Protection and got a divorce through them. My family did not approve. They thought it would dishonour them. They are not religious, but they care about their image. When I got a divorce, they refused to receive me in their house or see me. They told everyone that my husband and I had left to go to Saudi Arabia.

I was fine without them. I depended on myself. I worked by teaching English classes, cooking and selling food and doing housework. I stood on my own legs. I kept a low profile and my family didn't bother me.

One day, I had a car accident. I had to go to the police station to give details and go through security procedures. I called my family to ask them to pick me up. They refused. I called my friend, who sent her husband to pick me up.

Suddenly, as we were driving, a car stopped next to ours. My uncles got out. They had a gun, and pointed it at us. They made me get out of the car and into theirs. They drove me to an isolated, abandoned part of town. There, they shot me with a 38 mm revolver. I received 18 bullets in the legs and waist. I pretended to be dead. They called my younger brother, to come pick me up and to pre-

tend that he did the shooting and that he killed me for family honour but my brother saw I was alive and took me to the hospital.

There, my left leg began to rot. After few months, I could see worms start eating my rotting flesh. They had to amputate my leg.

In the court case, my younger brother testified that he had shot me for reasons of honour. He was a minor at the time, so he would get a reduced sentence. But he came to visit me in the hospital, and when he saw the worms eating my leg, he withdrew his testimony and said he wasn't guilty.

After many operations and months in several hospitals, they sent me to jail because I was unable to pay the hospital fees.

It was Lubna Dawany⁴⁷ who saved me. I wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for her. She got me out of jail and found funds to get me a prosthetic leg. She took care of me and helped me find odd jobs.

My entire family, including my mother, refused to speak to me. They want me to drop charges in the case. I am entirely alone. With my disability, it is difficult to work, but I try.

This testimony was recorded in April 2011. No one has been found guilty. The case is now in the process of appeal. The victim decided to instruct another lawyer because she believed that the first lawyer was working together with her family and not in her interest. Yet she did not hire Lubna as her lawyer because she feared for Lubna's safety in defending such a case although Lubna provides her with support. She still has the scars of her ex-husband beating her with a knife. She will not be able to marry again.

Case Study

Case 2: Crimes committed in the name of honour

From Hussein, Rana, *Murder in the Name of Honour*, 2009

In this case documented by Jordanian author Rana Hussein, a woman was shot dead by her brother when he found out that she had been raped and impregnated by a neighbour. This case shows how the use of firearms differs from other methods of killing and plays an important role in alleging that the crime was committed in a “state of fury”. Indeed, shooting can kill in a matter of seconds, as opposed to other means of killing, and the presence and use of guns makes intervention almost impossible. The use of a gun therefore makes it easier to argue that the crime was committed in a “moment of fury” and may help the perpetrator obtain a reduced sentence according to Article 98. In documenting the case, Hussein notes that the perpetrator had acquired the gun to fire in celebration for a wedding ceremony:

*“Mohammad was originally going to a wedding and had a gun put by for the occasion. Some Jordanian men like to celebrate weddings by firing live rounds from shotguns – though the practice is illegal and anyone caught is generally prosecuted. Mohammad raced back into the room with his gun. While her mother watched, Mohammad shot his younger sister. (...) Mohammad turned himself in, claiming that he had killed his sister to cleanse his family’s honour.”*⁴⁴ Hussein later notes that Mohammad allegedly suffered from depression

and had told his mother “he acted hastily after becoming enraged and it solved nothing.”⁴⁵

Rana Hussein emphasises the way in which neighbours and family members, including the victim’s mother and sister, excuse this behaviour and find it justified, in upholding the family honour. Hussein reports that thanks to Article 98, the perpetrator was sentenced to only one year of imprisonment, and because his mother dropped the charges, he was free six months later.

As opposed to other family members, Amneh’s younger sister Salma did not think the killing was justified, “There is no justice in this life. The neighbour who caused my sister to become pregnant is relaxed and alive and my sister is dead.” According to Hussein, Salma was taken out of school after the incident because her family was concerned about her reputation and they wanted her always to be within their sight.”⁴⁶

Salma’s response highlights the issue of differing concepts of justice and notions of right and wrong. The case reveals that most community members do not view the male rapists and killers as the criminals but rather the young woman who is deemed to be the source of seduction.

In both of these cases, firearms were the preferred instruments for committing crimes in the name of honour. As the element of surprise is crucial in determining whether the crime was committed in a fit of passion, firearms can be helpful in making this argument in court, as opposed to other methods of killing. The availability of small arms increases the danger faced by Jordanian women; in a fit of passion, because of a simple rumour, a male family member can become angry and kill them. Instead of leaving

with bruises, these women will be dead, or disabled for life.

What are the challenges that have prevented Jordanian women’s groups from engaging with the issue of small arms control? What entry points for action have Jordanian women identified?

Challenges and Entry Points for Action

Challenges

According to the interviews, the main obstacles, which have prevented women from engaging with the issue of small arms control, is the lack of data available and the fact that women feel that the issue is viewed as being in competition with their attempts to secure women’s most basic rights.

■ Still trying to promote basic rights

The women interviewed stated that they had never worked on arms control before because they were still trying to protect and defend women’s basic rights. To them, arms control will be an issue to work on once some of the basics are secured:

“The issue of guns is interesting but it’s ahead of what we’re doing. We’re still at the stage of CEDAW⁴⁸, of obtaining a quota for women in parliament and working on broader issues such as basic rights, nationality law. The basics are not covered yet! So we are not ready to take on this issue.” – Interview, Arab Women’s Organisation, Amman, March 2011

■ Lack of available official data

State institutions do not have sex-disaggregated data on victims and perpetrators of gun-related crimes. None of the women’s shelters, hotlines and social workers working on violence against women, have integrated it in their work or asked victims if the perpetrator has access to a gun. However, all those interviewed agreed to begin working on the issue.

Entry points for action

In interviews, Jordanian women identified several opportunities to begin working on the issue in the Jordanian context. They also identified specific actions to take, which will be detailed in the Policy Recommendations section of the report.

■ Jordanian government “desperate” to control civilian gun possession

In January 2011, for the first time national legislation on the use of small arms was applied to a case of celebratory shooting. A man was sentenced to 5 years in prison for firing his gun in the air during a wedding celebration, injuring one person. In contrast to some of its neighbouring countries, Jordan is desperate to control civilian gun possession:

“At all major events, weddings, births, men express their happiness through gunshots. It is a very primitive way of expression. The government would like to control this

habit and would welcome any initiative on it.”
– Interview, Arab Women Organisation, March 2011

The willingness of the Jordanian government to control small arms presents the opportunity for women to take a leading role in strengthening gun control policies, and specifically to make them more gender-responsive. A potential focus would be to confiscate guns and revoke licences in cases of domestic violence and crimes committed in the name of honour.

■ UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and SALW control: elaborating a National Action Plan

“[UN Security Council Resolution] 1325 can be a strong tool in acting on this issue. It could be an introduction, a base.” – Women’s Studies Centre, Jordan University, Focus Group Session, Amman, May 2011

“I am interested in the topic [of small arms] because it is related to the issue of women’s security. According to Security Council Resolution 1325, women all over the world should be part of the movement. The resolution speaks about two things: participation in peace processes and prevention of armed conflict. If we want to tackle the issue of small arms, I think that the best approach is to consider 1325 as a basis. How can we help women and women NGOs, women’s activists to participate in the protection of women? If there is a space for us as women to do campaigns and advocacy to protect women, then I see myself in this. I have this in

mind, the action plan for 1325. I see ourselves in advocacy and awareness-raising because we are a national network.” – Arab Women’s Organisation, Focus Group Session, Amman, May 2011

In a focus group held in May 2011 in Amman, women’s rights organisations pointed to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as an entry point for action. They specifically expressed interest in developing a National Action Plan (NAP) on 1325 that would include recommendations on SALW control. Jordanian women independently came to the same conclusion that the IANSA Women’s Network had come to before: links can and should be made between UNSCR 1325 and SALW control.⁴⁹ These links have been made in the 1325 National Action Plans of several countries, including The Philippines, Uganda, Norway and Portugal.⁵⁰



Context

“The Palestinian community is subjected to a set of values that are based on tribal ideologies, and our concern here is in the use of armed violence in that matter, where the Palestinian family still seeks revenge in most dispute cases, where usually the price of such behaviour is paid by hundreds of Palestinian families, negatively impacting the women in particular.” – Written Communication, Rural Women Development Society, Bethlehem, July 2011

Because of the occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, the phenomenon of SALW possession and use in Occupied Palestinian Territory differs from other countries. Official figures do not exist due to a highly secretive trade, but in 2007, it was estimated that the total number of guns held by civilians in OPT was 125,000.⁵¹ Since 1967, East Jerusalem has been under the occupation of Israel. Meanwhile, Gaza and the West Bank have been governed separately for the past four years. While Gaza is controlled by Hamas, the West Bank is divided in three areas. Over 60% of the West Bank is considered Area C where Israel retains control over security, planning and zoning. Area A, which consists of around 17.2 % of the West Bank, is under full Palestinian civil and security control. Area B is under full Palestinian civil control and joint Palestinian-Israeli security control. Under international law, Israel is considered responsible for security in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as occupying power. This complex situation, characterised by contradictions within the balance of power and the fact that the Palestinian Authority (PA) is responsible for security in only 17.2% of the West Bank, has led to general lack of control and made law enforcement and small arms control all the more challenging.

Furthermore, the Palestinian context of resistance has contributed to legitimising gun possession, but only to a certain extent. Today, the official position of the PA leadership in the West Bank is that peaceful

resistance has been much more effective for the progress of a Palestinian state than armed violence.

Successive occupations have strengthened patriarchal tribal structures

As with other Arab societies, gun possession is connected to the historical patriarchal tribal system strengthened by the continuous occupations by the Ottomans, British, and Israelis. These occupations have favoured tribal laws and tribal justice.⁵² For Arab tribes in OPT, guns traditionally represented a source of power where disputes were restricted to water sources, ownership of land, vengeance and protecting cattle herds.⁵³ Focus group participants in 2005 pointed to the negative role the PA played in strengthening tribal structures and weakening its own role, by providing tribes with financial support. “As a result, citizens conferred their loyalty first to their families and tribes ahead of state institutions and political parties.” Families often own one gun, which all members contribute to its purchase. Gun violence involves not only the victim and perpetrator, but the entire family. The entire family is responsible for any death or injury perpetrated by one of its members and must pay compensation to the victim’s family. If no solution is found, wars of revenge may ensue. Women generally do not own or carry guns but greatly suffer from these revenge killings when husbands or male relatives are killed or injured. They often find themselves in the role of breadwinner and suffer financial debt and poverty, having to care for their children alone. In addition, they are afraid to leave their homes and their sense of insecurity is heightened.

Violence against women severe and underreported

Violence against women in OPT is severe and under-reported, fuelled by militarisation and divide. According to a survey on crimes committed in the name of honour in the period 2004-2006, the two most common methods of killing were shooting and strangling. Crimes committed in the name of honour generally go unpunished.⁵⁴ A study released by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2006 showed that 61.7% of ever-married women experienced psychological violence, 23.3% physical violence, and 10.9% sexual violence at least once during the year, respectively. 25% of never-married women were exposed to physical violence and 52.7% to psychological violence by a household member, at least once during the year.⁵⁵

Laws in effect in the West Bank and Gaza derive from Ottoman, British Mandate, pre-1967 Egyptian (for Gaza) and Jordanian (for the West Bank) law, Israeli and PA legislation, as well as Israeli military orders. Palestinian judges lack proper training and experience.⁵⁶ There are no specific provisions under the prevailing penal codes in the West Bank and Gaza that address domestic violence. Police and judges may apply more general provisions of the penal codes. A draft penal code, which would unify the codes in the West Bank and Gaza, was brought before the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2003, but remains in draft form.⁵⁷ A new draft was presented to the President but it has still not been ratified.

West Bank

Palestinian women in the West Bank are subjected to several levels of violence, including violence from Israeli settlers, often armed, and from the Israeli army, as well as within their own families and communities.⁵⁸ The proliferation of small arms among settlers and the

constant presence of the Israeli military in most of the West Bank reinforces the notion that associates power with the possession of arms. Meanwhile, since the start of the second Intifada (2000), it has been claimed that Palestinian men are facing a crisis in masculinity, not being able to provide, protect, or support their families and communities against an outside aggressor. It has been argued that this has contributed to an increase in violence against women and girls.⁵⁹ According to Shalboub-Kevorkian, “The intensification of Israeli violence (...), and the repeated public humiliation of the figure of the Palestinian male through attempts to challenge his masculinity and virility (...), have combined to deepen gender conflicts in the domestic sphere.”⁶⁰ Small arms possession may therefore be seen as a way to reassert masculinity.

Israeli military and settler violence

A former Israeli soldier from the Israeli organisation Breaking the Silence reports from his experience serving in the West Bank, “You walk into the old city [of Hebron] in the middle of the night, walk into a random house, wake up and search the family, shoot bullets in the air. The family needs to feel like the army is always there.” (Hebron, May 2011) There is a lack of accountability for the perpetrators of violence, with few investigations or prosecutions of those responsible. Women often do not report complaints to the police, knowing that no action will be taken and fearing the Israeli police.⁶¹

In 2004, over half of the reported crimes against Palestinians were committed by the Israeli army and settlers.⁶² Israel’s failure to enforce its own laws has highly negative consequences on women and girl’s personal security. Israeli settlers are very rarely prosecuted for attacks on Palestinian civilians. Examining files of Palestinian complaints in 2005, the Israeli human rights organisation Yesh Din found that 90% were closed without the Israeli police taking any

action. The inability of the PA police to protect citizens or enforce orders in a large portion of the West Bank particularly harms women.⁶³ In September 2010, after learning that a settler killed in a shooting attack had his gun license revoked, the Israeli Ministry of the Interior decided that settlers in the West Bank would be given permits without police authorisation. 'We won't allow deaths as a result of bureaucracy,' said the Minister of the Interior. According to the new directive, gun licenses are issued without police authorisation and are based solely on the professional opinion of Firearms Division personnel.⁶⁴

Since April 2011, a new policy formulated by the Israeli Public Security Ministry now gives settlers preference in gun licensing procedures. Under the new guidelines, Israeli citizens who live in places defined by security officials as "danger regions" will receive preference in gun license issuance procedures. This danger zone designation extends to the entirety of the West Bank. During meetings of Knesset committees in February 2011, settler representatives argued that several Israeli citizens in the West Bank with criminal records couldn't get guns for self-protection. Police Brigadier General. Meir Ben Yishai responded that, "If someone throws a stone at a demonstration

Case Study

Armed violence near settlements in the West Bank

From the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)

AR lives in the Wadi Al-Husein neighbourhood in Hebron and her home is only a short distance from the Israeli settlement of Kiryat Arba. She is a mother with four children aged between 3 and 8 years old. "On 4 December 2008 at around 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon I was at home. I noticed that the settlers had gathered. I took precautions since I was alone with my children. I took them inside the house and locked the doors and windows. At around 1:30 p.m. I started to hear voices. I looked through the side of the window and saw tens of settlers. One of them was carrying a gun in his hand which looked like a machine gun. I was scared. I didn't know where to hide my children. I took them to my bedroom and put them on the floor between my bed and my younger son's bed. A short while later I heard the settlers talking in Hebrew. (...) I heard them say "Arabi meken" which I know in Hebrew means "Arab prostitute". I also heard shooting and voices of women shouting." The speaker's husband called her to tell her to take the cooking canister out of the kitchen as the settlers

were burning the firewood next to their house. A neighbour came to take the mother and children to her own house and the settlers threw rocks at them. Her testimony continues to highlight the impunity of settler violence, facilitated by small arms, and how this has affected her psychologically,

At around 8:30pm I went back to my house with my husband. The settlers had already destroyed the water tanks and the entire area around the house was burnt down, windows were broken and the wood was burned. (...) There were only three Israeli soldiers trying to prevent tens of settlers from attacking us, and every now and then they threw a tear gas canister at the groups of settlers. (...) I later found out that the shooting was directed at our elderly neighbour Abdel Hai Matariyeh who was injured. This incident greatly affected my psychological state of mind and my energy level. (...) The slightest sound now scares me, scares me a lot.⁶⁶

that does not suffice as a reason to disqualify a firearm request - we do not deny permits on those grounds, and I say that responsibly."⁶⁵

The following testimonies recorded by Palestinian women's groups highlight the effects of these policies on Palestinian women and the threats posed by settlers' easy access to, and misuse of, small arms:

Palestinians' access to small arms is limited and complicated

60% of young people in Ramallah surveyed in 2005 study believed there were too many guns in their communities. The influx of weapons into the West Bank occurred before and during the second Intifada, as "Israel's security forces gave little attention to weapons smuggling, presuming that this would negatively affect Palestinian internal community stability."⁶⁷

Today, the availability of guns is very limited to Palestinians. The Palestinian Security Reform undertaken since 2007 has been accompanied by disarmament and arms control efforts. "Everyone knows everything about everyone. In a small community, everyone will know. When someone is shot during a wedding, the next day, [Israeli] soldiers come to the house." – West Bank Interview, May 2011

Palestinians congratulate their security forces for "confronting criminals and thugs" and enabling "ordinary families to walk outside after dark". A Palestinian student who returned to his native Jenin in 2008 after two years abroad was only half-joking when he said that he, "Hardly recognised the city without the guns in the streets".⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the disarmament efforts of some armed groups have not been complete. According to a PA security official interviewed by the International Crisis Group in May 2010, "Some weapons were given or sold to the PA, but the lion's share was hidden".⁶⁹

Guns and masculinity

Focus group participants in the 2005 study pointed to the fact that young people use guns to try to make an impression on their peers, "They feel proud and confident when they carry guns and fire them, with or without occasion. Young people carry guns as a means of self-assertion and a show of manhood." The association of guns with masculinity was confirmed in a recent interview with a women's rights activist in Nablus, "Only men use guns here, and sometimes they are part of their personality." (May 2011)

Women's organisations reported that, especially in the south, young men from different families sometimes settle their differences in armed clashes, which often end in killing. Women have to suffer the long-term psychological and socio-economic impact of these revenge killings and find themselves marginalised by their communities, particularly if widows, and having to care for their families on their own.

Guns and domestic violence

Palestinian women are also direct victims of psychological and physical violence at gunpoint in the home. So far women's shelters and social workers have not integrated the presence or use of firearms in their work with domestic violence survivors through asking whether the perpetrator threatened them with a gun or has access to one. Palestinian women already lack trust in institutions and fear reprisal from their families or that their husbands will be sent to Israeli jails if they share this information with those outside of the immediate family. Women do not even trust women's centres, as they do not know who this information will go to and they fear that it might be shared with Palestinian or Israeli authorities against their will.

"A few years ago, a woman was threatened with a gun by her husband. It took time, two or three months, before she could say, 'Okay, the police can come'. The police came and took his gun away. She got a divorce. The police now have a new section on 'family protection', with police officers trained to deal with these problems. However, they still believe this is a private matter. Women don't trust the police. They are too afraid that the family will be angry. Asking women whether their husband has access to a gun might also frighten them. They will say: 'Why are you asking?' They might wonder if this information can go to the Israelis." – Interview, Family Defence Society, Nablus, May 2011

As few Palestinian women who suffer intimate partner or family violence seek help from institutions,⁷⁰ it is probable that more women are suffering in silence from the threat of their husbands' guns. Unable to speak out in fear that their husbands will go to jail in Israel, they may live in fear and subjugation for years.

"My neighbour's husband was a policeman. They had three daughters. He used to threaten her with his gun. For two years, she was shut away, closeted in her home and never dared to leave because she was so afraid. Finally, she managed to get out and marry someone else. Now she lives a semi-normal life." – Interview, Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, Nablus, May 2011

"Eight months ago, there was a killing in the name of honour by a policeman. He was doing the night shift. In the middle of the night, at 2:00 am, one of his team workers stopped a car. His co-worker takes the IDs of all the people in the car and brings them

to the police car. The policeman looks at the IDs and suddenly he notices that one of them belongs to his wife. Enraged, the policeman runs over to the car, takes out his gun and shoots the four people inside. Because he used his gun from work, it was confiscated and one of the charges brought against him was misuse of the gun. He only got a couple months of jail time because it was a crime committed in the name of honour. But usually, policemen are not allowed to use their guns outside of work." – Interview, Sharek Youth Forum, Ramallah, May 2011

Despite the claim that it is impossible for Palestinians in the West Bank to have access to firearms, it is clear that small arms continue to have an impact on Palestinian women in the West Bank, including in their own homes. These cases show that armed domestic violence is a problem, and remains particularly invisible in the West Bank, where women are more reluctant than usual to seek help and share information about their husbands' guns.

East Jerusalem

After Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967, Palestinian residents in Jerusalem were issued Jerusalem-specific identity cards. These cards are permanent residency cards for Palestinian residents only, giving them access to Jerusalem. Israeli control prohibits gun possession and use. Many interviewees claimed that no Palestinians in East Jerusalem have guns, as it is considered too risky.

Nevertheless, interviews revealed that guns continue to be used, albeit as discreetly and secretly as possible, by Palestinians in East Jerusalem as a means to express happiness in wedding celebrations, or in direct confrontations including revenge killings, fights

Case Study

Crime in the name of honour in Silwan, East Jerusalem

From Silwan and Abu Tor Women's Centre

This case recorded in an interview from May 2011 shows how impossible it is to find accurate data on the use of small arms and honour killings, in particular in East Jerusalem, where police and justice systems are not functioning.

"Concerning girls, normally we don't know all the details. We know only after a while. Last year, a woman was killed, with a gun. She had children. Her father killed her and put her in a grave. But someone found the grave and it became known. Her father suspected that she had a relationship with another man who wasn't her husband. It happened in this street, in Abu Tor – that's the only reason I know. Her husband started looking for her. At first, her father searched also, pretended not to know. He didn't kill her here. He killed her in Jericho. He took her there and shot her and buried her on their land. But before he killed her, she stopped on the way, to take money from a cash machine. The Palestinian police led the investigation and traced it back to him. But because he has a Jerusalem ID, he is free. The Palestinian police can't come here, and the Israeli police don't care. Even if he goes to the West Bank, they will probably let him go free because he killed her for 'reasons of honour'.

I know about this case, only because they were in our street. But usually, no one would know. If someone gets killed for 'reasons of honour', nothing will happen. In Israel, if they get caught, they might get two to three years in jail and then go free. There is no justice here. Another girl was suspected of adultery. Her father shot and killed her in Silwan. No one can say anything about this. No way! It's impossible. It means giving information away to the Israeli police. No one keeps guns at home, because at any moment they can be searched. But people think it's OK to kill." – Interview, Silwan and Abu Tor Women's Centre, May 2011.

between families, and killings committed in the name of honour. The absence of the rule of law in East Jerusalem means that crimes among Palestinians, including crimes committed in the name of honour go un-investigated and unpunished and are generally dealt with in informal, local justice systems, where the strongest wins.

"Even in Jerusalem you'll find guns in certain places, in Shufat, Beit Hanina. But it's almost impossible to find out what the real situation is. No one can say 'I have a gun' when you ask. But they will use it, if there is a problem between families. It is informal justice. If someone dies [in an armed fight], they pay money, maybe 4,000 JOD [Jordanian Dinar, EUR4,218] in compensation. In the Mount of Olives, two or three months ago, two young men shot at each other for a silly reason, a problem between the two families. Four children died." – Interview, Beit Hanina, Al Bara for Jerusalem Women, May 2011

"In Shufat, a 22-year-old man died at a wedding earlier this year. His 18-year-old wife was pregnant. She will have to deal with the burden her entire life." – Interview, Beit Hanina, Al Bara for Jerusalem Women, May 2011

Gaza

The main influx of arms into Gaza began at the start of the Second Intifada in 2000. In contrast to the first Intifada during which Palestinians organised peaceful protests, Palestinian resistance responded to Israeli policies in the second Intifada with the use of violence, including gun violence. A large number of weapons came from Egypt and through Israeli middlemen but Palestinians also sought to locally produce small arms and light weapons.

Families and individuals also sought to own weapons for purposes other than armed resistance. By 2005, from responses from members of focus groups, it was found that 89.6% of respondents believed that there were too many weapons in their society.

In August 2005, Israel “disengaged” from Gaza and withdrew all settlements and military personnel. It continued to maintain military control of Gaza’s airspace, coastline and land border with Israel, including the passage of goods and people. In 2007, armed clashes between Hamas and Fatah supporters in Gaza escalated, and Hamas militants successfully took over Fatah-controlled institutions in the territory. Some 600 Palestinians were killed in the fighting and thousands of Gazans fled to the West Bank.⁷¹ Since then, Hamas-controlled Gaza has been split from the West Bank, governed by the PA. In May 2011, Hamas and Fatah announced a surprise unity deal following protests by Palestinian youth demanding unification of the governments. But progress has been limited to the two parties agreeing to carry out confidence-building measures, such as releasing prisoners they hold from each other’s movements.⁷²

Fatah-Hamas clashes

It is almost impossible to know the current number of small arms in Gaza, yet women reported being affected by clashes between Fatah and Hamas and the use of small arms in domestic violence and crimes committed in the name of honour. Fatah-Hamas conflicts, usually armed, have fragmented families, confronting sons fight against fathers and brothers against husbands. Gazan women don’t generally take part in these clashes yet greatly suffer from their psychological and socio-economic effects.

Crimes committed in the name of honour and domestic violence

Women reported several recent cases of killings committed in the name of honour with guns. It begs the question, how many women don’t defy their brothers because they have guns? These women will know that if they are killed in the name of honour it will be done with complete impunity.

In Gaza, under Hamas, personal status law puts women at a stark disadvantage in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and domestic abuse. Rape, domestic abuse, and crimes committed in the name of honour are common, and these crimes often go unpunished. A December 2009 study by the Palestinian Woman’s Information and Media Centre found that 77% of women in Gaza had experienced violence of various sorts, 53% had experienced physical violence, and 15% had suffered sexual abuse.⁷³

In the Middle Area, recently, I was in a community centre to attend the group [session on domestic violence] for men. Suddenly, we heard gunshots. Bullets. We looked at each other and asked ourselves what happened. What’s the story? A few minutes later we found out. There was a girl, a young girl, 16 years old, who was killed by her brother at home. We all heard it, all the people in the workshop and I. Why? He killed her because of “honour”. Because he thought that she had fallen in love with someone, and how could she? So he killed her, using the gun of the previous authority [Fatah]. And because he has this legal gun, “legal” as they consider it, no one can say anything. I’m not sure if he was even put in prison or not. He has a legal gun and she was his sister. - Interview in Gaza, Women’s Affairs Technical Committee, January 2011

“In cases of crimes committed in the name of honour, perpetrators always get very light punishments. Two to six months, maximum. The excuse is always that she was guilty – of adultery for example. But usually, these are lies, and in reality, the woman was killed for inheritance reasons or because of a conflict in the family. Maybe the husband was bored of his wife and killed her.”- Interview in Gaza, Women’s Affairs Technical Committee, January 2011

“One woman came to us [Women’s Affairs Technical Committee] and said that her brother wanted to kill her with his gun because of inheritance issues. She was afraid and asked us to protect her. We made a quick campaign with the feminists of the Gaza strip and brought the police. We made him write a letter pledging that he would not hurt her.” – Interview in Gaza, January 2011

It is clear that patterns of small arms possession and use and policies governing the latter in Gaza differ vastly from those in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank. However, common threads are present in all of the countries examined. Small arms facilitate violence against women, serve to control women’s sexuality, reinforce private justice and uphold a patriarchal system of honour.

Although Palestinian women have been engaging with the issue of SALW in various ways through their work, what are the main challenges that have prevented Palestinian women from focusing on the issue in a more systematic way? What opportunities can Palestinian women take advantage of to take a strong stance on small arms control?

Challenges and Entry Points for Action

Challenges

■ Power struggle and frustration at the impotence of the Palestinian Security Force (PSF)

The main challenge facing Palestinian women has been the complexity of the situation and the absence of the rule of law in many parts of the Territory. According to a recent ICG report,⁷⁴ cooperation between Israeli and Palestinians has mainly meant Palestinian compliance with Israeli rules. The Palestinian security forces are seen as an, “Uncomfortable hybrid, simultaneously working in the national interest to ensure order and on behalf of a foreign agenda to subjugate armed Palestinian resistance.” The occupation makes PA law enforcement very difficult as the Israeli army must approve all PA movements from one Palestinian city to another. When the Israeli army conducts an operation in Area A, the Palestinian police must withdraw immediately. According to a PA security official, “We

know well that our officers risk being targeted by the Israelis if they don't get out in time”.⁷⁵ Over the past years, the PA has worked hard to prevent attacks on settlers but repeated settler harassment has gone unanswered. ICG warns, “Without any prospect of Palestinian statehood, the PSF will start to look like collaborators”.

■ Lack of trust in authorities and difficulty of collecting data

Only a tiny percentage of women suffering physical violence from spouses seek any form of legal recourse. Most women instead talk to other family members or relatives. Women participants in focus groups also revealed a great reluctance to add to family tensions. Part of this may be problems of access to police, or lack of trust in them and the courts.⁷⁶ In a 2005 survey, when asked if participants or their households possessed weapons, all the respondents declined to answer.⁷⁷

Entry Points for Action

■ Capacity-building for local authorities and law enforcement

“The first intifada, which was popular and largely nonviolent, gave us a political process culminating in the Oslo Accords. The second intifada – in which violence played a much more prominent role – destroyed everything we had built. The strategic lesson is clear: confronting Israel successfully can only be done through unarmed means.”⁷⁸

This quote expresses the view of most of the PA leadership, who would welcome policy initiatives to curb armed violence. In June 2011, leading women's rights groups including Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, Rural Women Development Society, Women's Studies Centre, and the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development organised a workshop with officials from the PA and the media on small arms and gender, masculine gun culture, and the impact of gun violence on women. The Attorney General, Dr Ahmed Barak, stressed the importance of conducting a scientific study in this area, offered his support and welcomed any recommendations that would come out of such a study.⁷⁹

Women's organisations have reported police cooperation in sheltering women victims of severe

domestic abuse. Women's groups can therefore play a role in training Palestinian police and judiciary for enforcement and investigation, and support special units for family and child protection in particular.

■ Raising awareness, with youth in particular

“The only way to have justice is to educate the people, to educate the youth, teach them it's not right to kill and be violent. It's the only way for us! In a high school class, last year, I asked 30 youth, who were 16 years old, “Do you have the right to beat a woman?” Only one said no. In the West Bank there are a lot of programs, but in Jerusalem it's not the same, especially in the Silwan area.” – Interview, Silwan and Abu Tor Women's Centre, East Jerusalem, May 2011

Many grassroots, community-based women's groups expressed a keen interest in working with youth to raise awareness about violence, so that young men stop thinking that it's ok to kill and beat a woman. (Interviews in East Jerusalem, May 2011) These women are already doing vital work to protect and support other women and to raise awareness in their communities against violence, but they often lack significant resources. Campaign and awareness-raising support could target these groups in particular.

1. Strengthen and develop research and data collection at all levels

Research and data collection on the links between small arms, gender and violence against women is the first but extremely fundamental step towards other activities as interviews show:

- “It would be good to do research and look at the verdicts in courts: how many murders of women were by guns? I would say it's 90%, but I don't know.” – Interview, Arab Women's Organisation, Amman, March 2011
- “It is important to document these violations in order to concentrate on the reasons and factors, why women are subjected to extreme violence.” – Focus Group Session/Written Communication, Family Defence Society, Nablus, May 2011
- “The research is not the aim: it's a tool to know about the problem. In our work, I think it's very important. We all have something here and there, but we are not in the middle of it. Without the research we cannot do anything.” – Focus Group Session, Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, Ramallah, May 2011
- “Data and capacity-building are the most important - for us, in the same field, to share with other women.” – Focus Group Session, Rural Women Development Society, Bethlehem, May 2011
- “I think it is great idea to conduct a regional action oriented research about the impact/ effect of arm conflict/small arms on women.” – Focus Group Session/Written Communication, Women's Studies Centre, East Jerusalem, May 2011

Women from all three countries noted the importance of collecting and consolidating data, as interviews show. The Women's Studies Centre at Jordan University offered to lead a regional comparative study with the assistance of their Masters' students.

Palestinian women wrote a concept paper to find funds to further investigate small arms in OPT, noting, “This study is important since it can be used as an aid to the relevant parties in developing policies and designing appropriate interventions that address the dangers of possession and use of small arms, all based on the outcomes and results of the study.”

A comprehensive study should include questionnaires for police, lawyers, judges, health professionals, hotlines/shelters, social workers and address the following:

- Health care providers: do you note what kinds of weapons are being used against women whose injuries you treat?
- Police: Do you respond to calls on domestic violence? Search homes for the presence of weapons? Confiscate weapons in cases of domestic violence?
- Shelters/hotlines: Do you ask if the perpetrator has threatened the victim with, or has access to, a gun?

Furthermore, studies should include focus groups and in-depth interviews to collect age and sex-disaggregated data on perceptions of guns and security and an analysis of laws, forensic data (injury and homicide) and court decisions.

2. Build women's capacity to influence policy...

During interviews and focus groups, women expressed the need for training on SALW as well as a strong interest in leading trainings and awareness-raising sessions themselves, both in their communities and with local authorities.

■ Support regional and local Trainings of Trainers (Tot) for women's groups

*"As a group, we have to know more about the issue. If we are planning for this network, at the community level, I think as a group we have to know about this specific question, about the effects of guns on women, how we can put our efforts into it. We have to do **capacity-building** for us."* – Rural Women Development Society, OPT Focus Group Session, May 2011

Women in all three countries reported the need to build their own capacities in dealing with such a sensitive issue as small arms, as interviews show. A women's training of trainers (ToT) would:

- Increase capacity of women and women's organisations to inform and influence their governments and parliamentarians to improve national policy on armed violence reduction and small arms control
- Ensure stronger implementation of UNSCR 1325 through increasing women's meaningful participation in, and awareness of, small arms control and disarmament

Building on the results from the multi-country research (recommendation 1), trainings of trainers for women should include sessions on: SALW – terminology and concepts; Gender dimensions of SALW possession and use; Impact of guns on women; International and regional instruments and standards on SALW and women's rights; UNSCR 1325 – entry points re SALW; UN small arms process; the ATT and women's rights; National gun laws including links to domestic violence legislation; The role of National Commissions on Small Arms; and communication and campaign strategies.

...and support them to lead their own trainings

■ Support women to lead trainings for professionals and local authorities dealing with violence

*"We can include the police in our project. We must target them. We have to discuss with them **how to protect**. Listen – who implements the laws? The policemen. We can do trainings with them."* – Messengers for Peace/YWCA, Jordan, Focus Group Session, May 2011

Women also expressed interest in training others, including male community members, health care providers, police, judges and shelters and hotlines. Gun violence and violence against women are cross-cutting issues that require the cooperation of a variety of sectors to be effectively dealt with. For example, a study conducted in Lebanon in 2010 found that inadequate training for health care professionals, and

providers' attitudes toward violence, limits the role that the health system plays in identifying violence against women and supporting survivors. Health workers could be trained and systems improved to better respond to violence against women and collect data.⁶⁰ Furthermore, women's shelters, police and security should also be trained to identify cases of armed violence against women and respond to them. In order to reinforce the justice systems, judges, prosecutors and lawyers should also be trained. These trainings should be designed, led and organised by local women's groups following their participation in a Training of Trainers initiative.

3. Support women's advocacy and campaigning efforts on small arms and disarmament

In interviews and focus groups, women expressed the aim to become advocates and change-makers at all levels, including at the grassroots, community level and national and international levels with decision-makers. Women can build on the results of the research and the knowledge gained in the trainings to become more effective advocates.

■ Women influencing and designing effective national, regional and international policies

"We want to set laws, we want to eradicate this phenomenon; we want to raise awareness of people regarding this issue. The intervention of police and authorities is not enough, especially for Area C. We can make a campaign. Nobody is talking about it. All the women's institutions talk about sexual and physical abuse, but no one talks about these women who suffer from revenge killings. We need to target both community and official levels, maybe with the Ministry of Education to include the revenge issue. Until now, the school system does not address this problem. This is a big issue. We have to start to make awareness with the Mosque, etc." – Focus Group Session, Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, Ramallah, May 2011

"The Women's Studies Centre has developed the bereaved to bereaved women approach which we can share with organisations in the region who are suffering from arms. It will help us to put pressure on officials to end violence against women (political one), end conflict and occupation; lobby internationally and regionally on the issue." – Written Communication, Women's Studies Centre, East Jerusalem, May 2011

At the policy-making level, the main goals would be to improve legislation protecting women and gun control legislation to ensure that those who have a history of domestic violence cannot access guns, and improve implementation of laws and gender-responsive investigations and law enforcement.

■ Women campaigning at the grassroots level: Arab uprisings, youth and peace education

"The only way to have justice is to educate the people, to educate the youth, teach them it's not right to kill and be violent. It's the only way for us!" – Interview, Silwan and Abu Tor Women Centre, May 2011

"What we have seen in some of the latest uprisings is that they were peaceful. The whole idea is that small arms were not used. We should emphasise the example of Egypt and Yemen in particular, which show that arms should not be used anywhere, by any person, in any case. We have the problem of Palestine, which is an extremely unjust situation. Arms were justified to fight for freedom. But now you can fight for liberty without arms. It is possible to fight against an unjust dictatorship by peaceful means. Peaceful thinking has not been part of our education. From now on, it should be." – Arab Women's Organisation, Focus Group Session, Amman, 23 May 2011

At the grassroots level, women identified youth as the most important target of awareness-raising sessions in order to promote a culture of peace and non-violence and to break the links between masculinity and gun possession. Targets should also include parliamentarians, civil society groups, health care professionals, law enforcement officials, border and customs officials, judiciary and women's shelters.

4. Build networks of women working on small arms control

A regional network of Arab women focused on gender, small arms, women's rights and armed violence would benefit women's organisations by improving information sharing and strengthening their work:

"A network is very important. Unity is always power. We can exchange information and support each other." – Interview, Women's Humanitarian Organisation, Beirut, Lebanon, May 2011

"I would think of two kinds of networks: one for women's organisations working on this issue with women and the other one is for bereaved women/traumatised women who suffered from small arms/arms conflict in the region. The first should be to share experiences; the second would be support network for bereaved women. The first would come up with policies that the officials should adopt while dealing with women affected by arm conflict/small arms. The second is to provide psychosocial support and empowerment for bereaved women to provide support to other bereaved women as well raise the awareness of the community to stop using arms (this also should be the purpose from the first network). We can contribute in sharing our experience and approach to other countries in the region; be part of the first network; in leading campaigns, workshops, etc. We have the full capacity to conduct such work and contribute the time needed for it." – Written Communication, Women's Studies Centre, East Jerusalem, May 2011

In a study conducted in 2010 in East Jerusalem, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and charitable organisations, which tend to be much more isolated than NGOs because of their relative small size and lack of sophistication, expressed greatest interest in working with coalitions and believed that working with other women's organisations would be to their advantage. Furthermore, a need for issue-area linkages and networking between international and local NGOs was articulated, "While the effectiveness

of specific coalitions may be questionable, the overall feeling was that it would be to the benefit of a number of women's organisations to interact with organisations working on similar issues, provided a more effective way could be found to do this. It was particularly clear that current information sharing is poor".⁸¹

Without fail, all interviewees expressed the interest in increased networking and exchange opportunities with other women working in the same field, in order to:

- Exchange strategies in establishing national action plans on UNSCR 1325
- Learn how to speak about such a sensitive issue as SALW

The desire for democratisation in the Arab world is clear, and Arab women unmistakably want and should be part of the changes currently occurring, including around security matters. Those women interviewed in the course of this research have consistently and clearly expressed a strong desire to take an active stance on small arms control, disarmament, peace and security in their communities and at national level. They are tired of living in fear: fear that their brothers and husbands will shoot each other and fear they themselves will be shot for a variety of reasons beyond their control.

Although the impact of small arms on women in the Middle East has in many ways remained invisible, it is evident that the proliferation of small arms has facilitated and aggravated violence against women and the violations of their rights on a daily basis. It is obvious that this trend continues and there is a stated need from women in the region itself for support and assistance to make this visible, to act upon what is often hidden, and to help prevent armed violence against women and girls.

Breaking the links between masculinity and guns is not simple or easy. But steps can and should be taken to improve women's involvement and participation in the traditionally male dominated sphere of small arms and disarmament. The timing is right for Arab women to influence and design policies that will effectively protect them against gun violence as expressed so clearly by one of the respondents: "As a woman, I won't feel safe to have a gun in my house. Even if it's a sensitive issue, you can still find ways to work on it. And you have to. You can't just keep saying, 'can't'."

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Annex 2: Interview Schedule

Interviews were informal discussions with one or several participants. When interviews were conducted separately with different members of an organisation, they are listed as separate interviews. When interviews were conducted together as a discussion with several members of an organisation, they are listed as one interview with multiple participants.

	Name/ Occupation	Organisation	Location	Date
1	Fatma Wahaidy	Women's Affairs Technical Committee	Gaza	10-Jan-11
2	Samra Fathy, Domestic violence coordinator	WATC	Gaza	10-Jan-11
3	Hala Riziq	WATC	Gaza	10-Jan-11
4	Fadi Abi Allam	Permanent Peace Movement	Beirut, Lebanon	3-Mar-11
5	Hakima Chaoui, teacher	Centre for Education on Human Rights of Women, Morocco	Beirut, Lebanon	17-Mar-11
6	Mona Makhamreh, lawyer	Messengers for Peace, YWCA, Jordan	Beirut, Lebanon	17-Mar-11
7	Hiba Izdahmal	Palestinian Women Humanitarian Organisation	Bourj Al Barajneh Camp, Beirut, Lebanon	21-Mar-11
8	Samira Maasri and Aida Abdul-Samad	YWCA	Beirut, Lebanon	21-Mar-11
9	Rima Abi Nader, social worker	KAFA	Beirut, Lebanon	22-Mar-11
10	Raghida Chamlouch, social worker and Laura Sfeir, President	Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Woman (LECORVAW)	Beirut, Lebanon	22-Mar-11
11	Nadine Moawad, activist	Nasawiya	Beirut, Lebanon	22-Mar-11
12	Anonymous, Political Council Member	Bourj Al Barajneh Camp	Beirut, Lebanon	23-Mar-11
13	Anonymous, Nurse	Bourj Al Barajneh Camp	Beirut, Lebanon	23-Mar-11
14	Mouna Kamar Mourad	Lebanese Council of Women	Beirut, Lebanon	23-Mar-11
15	Layla Hammarneh	Arab Women's Organisation (AWO)	Amman, Jordan	24-Mar-11
16	Rania Khayyat	Rural Women's Development Society	Ramallah, OPT	31-Mar-11
17	Kifah Manasra	Rural Women's Development Society	Bethlehem, OPT	5-Apr-11
18	Abu Ziyad	PA forensic medicine department	Bethlehem, OPT	5-Apr-11
19	Anonymous	Mehwar women's shelter	Bethlehem, OPT	5-Apr-11
20	Hanan Abu Ghoush	Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling	Ramallah, OPT	6-Apr-11
21	Marta Carbonell	Jerusalem Centre for Women	East Jerusalem	7-Apr-11
22	Hadeel Abdo	Women's Studies Centre	East Jerusalem	13-Apr-11
23	Nadia Shamrouk	Jordanian Women's Union	Amman, Jordan	19-Apr-11
24	Anon, Women's shelter	Jordanian Women's Union	Amman, Jordan	19-Apr-11
25	Anon, Research centre	Jordanian Women's Union	Amman, Jordan	19-Apr-11
26	Amneh Hilweh	Karama	Amman, Jordan	19-Apr-11

Annex 3: Focus Groups

27	Lubna Dawany, lawyer	SIGI, Family Development Association, Nizan Human Rights Law Group	Amman, Jordan	19-Apr-11
28	Ali Al Zenat	Madaba for Supporting Development	Amman, Jordan	21-Apr-11
30	Um and Abu Mohammad	Survivors	Madaba, Jordan	26-Apr-11
31	Anonymous	Jordanian Women's Union, Madaba	Madaba, Jordan	26-Apr-11
32	Dr. Mahasen Al Joggoub	Jordan University Women's Studies Centre	Amman, Jordan	27-Apr-11
33	Rim Abu Hassan, lawyer	Society for Victims of Family Violence	Amman, Jordan	28-Apr-11
34	Anonymous	Former forensic medicine specialist	Amman, Jordan	28-Apr-11
35	Mervat Salim	Gun Violence/ Honour Crime Survivor	Amman, Jordan	28-Apr-11
36	Vanessa Farr	UNDP East Jerusalem	Jerusalem	3-May-11
37	Suad Shtawi	Family Defence Society	Ramallah, OPT	4-May-11
38	Diab Zayed	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD)	Ramallah, OPT	5-May-11
39	Sandrine Amer	Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Centre (PWRDC)	Ramallah, OPT	9-May-11
40	Amal Khreisheh	PWWSD	Ramallah, OPT	10-May-11
41	Anne Claire Yaesh	PWWSD	Ramallah/Nablus, OPT	10-May-11
42	Karima Itkidic and Jamalet Bara	Al Bara for Jerusalem Women	Beit Hanina, Jerusalem	10-May-11
43	Dr. Abeer Rizeq Zayyad	Silwan and Abu Tor Women's Centre	Silwan, East Jerusalem	11-May-11
44	Sahar Othman	Sharek Youth Forum	Ramallah, OPT	11-May-11
45	Bisan Abu Ruqty	Miftah	Ramallah, OPT	14-May-11
46	Dr. Islah Jad	Birzeit University	Birzeit, OPT	14-May-11
50	Lamis Nasser	Women Forum for Human Rights	Amman, Jordan	18-May-11
51	Khawtar Khalafat	Family Guidance and Awareness Centre	Zarqa, Jordan	22-May-11
52	Rana Hussein	The Jordan Times	Amman, Jordan	22-May-11
53	Mariana Al Jabbour	Permanent Peace Movement	Beirut, Lebanon	24-May-11
54	Olfat Mahmood	Pal-WHO	Beirut, Lebanon	26-May-11
55	Mirna Sabbagh	UNDP Lebanon	Beirut, Lebanon	27-May-11

Focus groups were semi-structured discussions revolving around three central questions (see focus group questions below).

Dates, locations and participants

Ramallah, OPT, 13 May 2011

Host: Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC)

5 participants from: Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD), Rural Women Development Society (RWDS), WCLAC. Two organisations (Women's Studies Centre, East Jerusalem and Family Defence Society, Nablus) were unable to attend but sent answers to the focus group questions.

Amman, Jordan, 23 May 2011

Host: Women's Studies Centre, Jordan University
9 participants from: Jordanian Women's Union, SIGI, Arab Women's Organisation, Messengers for Peace/YWCA, Human Forum for Women's Rights, Karama, Women's Studies Centre, Jordan University

Tripoli, Lebanon, 27 May 2011

Host: Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Woman (LECORVAW)

12 participants from RFDL, Najdeh, Lecorvaw and local community-based organisations

Focus group questions

1. What should an Arab women's network on small arms look like?

- How would it be useful to you, in your work?
- What kind of network should it be?
- What would be its purpose?

2. What would be your role?

3. How does the topic of small arms/militarism/policing relate to this moment of change in the Arab region?

“As a woman, I won’t feel safe to have a gun in my house. Even if it’s a sensitive issue, you can still find ways to work on it. And you have to. You can’t just keep saying, ‘can’t’.”

Although the impact of gun violence on women in the region has remained largely invisible, the proliferation of small arms has prevented women from exercising some of their most basic rights. Direct and indirect impacts of small arms on women in the Middle East include armed domestic violence and “crimes committed in the name of honour”, as well as long term social, economic and psychological effects of revenge killings between male family members, tribal vendettas and celebratory shootings resulting in death and serious injury.

Women’s groups have already been working hard to combat violence against women, but what challenges have prevented women’s groups from engaging with the issue of small arms? How can women play a role in combating the proliferation of SALW in the region? What entry points for action have they identified?

This report presents the main findings of an assessment conducted in Lebanon, Jordan and Occupied Palestinian Territory from January to May 2011 by providing a situation overview, challenges and entry points for action in each country and presenting recommendations for future interventions. The findings presented in this report are based on visits to women’s community organisations, NGOs and women’s shelters, literature review and media monitoring, informal interviews and focus group discussions with practitioners, survivors, academics, lawyers, social workers and activists.



The IANSA Women's Network is the only international network focused on the connections between gender, women’s rights, small arms and armed violence.

**We are grateful to the Government of Norway
and to Oxfam Novib for their support.**