

Starts of Hope Society for the empowerment of women with disabilities
Social and Economic Policies Monitor – Al Marsad

Position Paper: The situation of women and girls with disabilities worsened under the emergency state



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The declaration of the Palestinian presidency of the state of emergency came on March 5, 2020, following for another month to continue until the month which was extended, the Covid19 epidemic (Virus Corona) of May. Following the government's announcement are a number of decisions and procedures, such as the announcement of the Prime Minister on March 22, the case of compulsory domestic isolation, and the These decisions came to confront restriction of movement to apply to the occupied Palestinian territories. the outbreak of the Corona virus after discovering a number of cases, and then the number of viral infections increased because of the occupation state's condescension for the lives of Palestinian workers inside the Green Line.

The spread of the virus in the world, and in Palestine came as a result of the absence of a global willingness to confront the spread of the epidemic in such prevalence and risk. Moreover, there were conflicting information about the length of time required to reach a cure or an effective vaccine to the virus. Many governments, including the Palestinian government tried to limit its spread and large outbreak due to great fear of the collapse of the health system. Nonetheless, the Palestinian health system had suffered for a long time due to the Israeli occupation's actions, and from low budgets and allocations assigned to its health system.

Through this, a lot of lessons were drawn internationally, as it became clear that the economic system favored profit over the life, dignity and well-being of people, which led to a weak and sluggish health system, and to a significant decline in the role of the social protection system, and in many cases it lead to its absence. In Palestine, which still lies for decades under the occupation of Israeli colonialism, was not better, on the contrary, as the occupation systematically worked on destroying any elements of the Palestinian society steadfastness. Also, accompanied this destruction with the developing vision of the liberal bet on the success of liberal policies development, which meant the marginalization of social protection systems and an absolute lack of a social security system, and a weakness in the health system ,and crumbling of the general health insurance system.

All this led to more poverty, unemployment and deprivation, specifically for groups of the social disregarded by the Israeli occupation and by these policies. The survival of these groups became conditional on providing substantial and essential concessions for life priorities. For example, selecting food on the account of medication, or selecting education on the account of adequate housing. In addition,

government and international interventions dispersed in modifying this structural imbalance in social and economic policies.

Persons with disabilities are considered to be among the most marginalized groups within Palestinian society, despite the existence of a law that stresses their rights since 1999. However, there lies the non-implementation of most of its provisions, because of the lack of appropriate means, mechanisms and standards from appropriate ministries to ensure the implementation of their duties towards persons with disabilities, despite their increase due to occupation practices that cause disability. Where their percentage of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip reached 5.8% for the year 2017 [\[1\]](#). Statistics indicate that the percentage of women and girls with disabilities reached 5.4% for the year 2017.

Compound marginalization that faces women and girls with disabilities every day:

More than one specialized report and studies point out that women and girls with disabilities suffer from compound marginalization, once because they are women, which is gender-based, and second because they are women with disabilities. The economic and the social conditions that surround them are considered the worse among most social groups, including of men with disabilities. In addition, Persons with disabilities generally suffer from a high unemployment rate among them, which reached about 37% [\[2\]](#). Moreover, the participation of women with disabilities in the workforce in Palestine reached only 4% of the total women with disabilities, compared to 24% for men with disabilities out of the total men with disabilities, and this indicates double discrimination against women with disabilities.

The widespread phenomenon of violence is increasing to affect more broadly women and girls with disabilities, as violence against women and girls with disabilities is not limited to violence based on gender, but also violence based on disability. The confluence of these two factors increases the level of risk and increases violence against women with disabilities.

The Violence Survey in the Palestinian Society which conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2019 indicated that 37% of women with disabilities, who are currently married or were ever married, were subjected to violence by their husbands at least once during a 12-month period. While 50% of battered women with disabilities have been subjected to violence Psychological versus 20% experienced physical violence at least once by their husbands in Palestine. The 27% of individuals (18-64

years) with disabilities who have never married have been subjected to violence at least once by a family member in Palestine within 12 months^[3].

The deteriorating reality of women and girls with disabilities in light of the imposed emergency:

The imposition of a state of emergency has led to the suspension of the economic life and many of the social activities, which cast a shadow on women with disabilities. Specifically, for them, to practice their right of health, their right to education, employment, and access to social protection programs and income security. In addition, they suffer from movement difficulty because of the absence of harmonization of buildings and means of transport. Besides, the majority of them rely heavily on the existence of a companion to complete different transactions. Therefore, when reviewing inter – governmental plans and procedures, we did not find thoughtful measures to the requirements and the needs of persons with disabilities in light of the state of emergency to ensure that no one would offend their fundamental rights.

At the end March, the Stars of hope Society for the empowerment of women with disabilities in partnership with the Social and Economic Policies Monitor (Al Marsad), and within the framework of the protection program 'Hemaya', have launched a survey aimed toward assessing the needs of women with disabilities in the West Bank as a first stage. Now, it is being implemented in the Gaza Strip. The survey included lists of women and girls with disabilities in various provinces, and then they were contacted to assess their reality using a special assessment model of needs, the survey has so far included more than 200 women and girls with disabilities.

The results of the survey highlighted a number of issues that negatively affect the lives of women and girls with disabilities, the most important of which are:

1. 39% of women with disabilities in the survey are facing financial difficulties in addition to physical difficulties as a result of a state of emergency.
2. 29% of women with disabilities face difficulty in accessing medication, hospital treatment, and obtaining medical supplies including assistive devices.
3. 11% of women and girls with disabilities indicated that they need psychological counseling as a result of the additional social pressures they experience because of the state of emergency.
4. Women indicated that there is great difficulty in mobility to get the the basic needs of life.

5. Women and girls with disabilities face a real problem, as rehabilitation sessions 'physical and occupational therapy' have stopped, which exacerbates movement and movement disabilities in particular.
6. Some working women with disabilities are suffering in order to provide food and drinks for their families as they are the main source of income, and is located on their shoulders the provision of basic needs of the family.
7. Most of the families interviewed were suffering from difficult economic conditions and are below the poverty line, which indicates the effect of the presence of a person with disabilities within the family, and the requirement for ongoing intervention in order to improve the standards of life for those families.
8. Some women and girls with disabilities are at risk of domestic violence due to increased pressure on the family as a whole in light of the current state of emergency, and with the lack of response from the system of national transformation to include them in the protection services of violence.
9. The vast majority of women with disabilities reported the absence of any communication by official government agencies with them under the state of emergency, which indicates the marginalization of urgent needs of this group in light of the emergency state.
10. The education procedures, and the adoption of e –learning, did not take into account the specificity of the situation of the population in terms of availability of tools and equipment and technological support to the process of distance education and the availability of the Internet, which is the basis for this process. Many of the families are lacking these tools since they are falling below the poverty line, including families Persons with disabilities, and a number of women with disabilities indicated that distance education methods are not suitable for persons with disabilities.

These results designate a decline in health, social and economic indicators of women and girls with disabilities, and their families, which we will continue to update according to the increase in the number of families that are scanned. Thus, contributing to the provision of data to official bodies concerned to begin a comprehensive integrating of disability in the emergency plan at the sectorial and semi sectorial level. Thus, alleviating rapidly from the impact of deterioration, and sparing women with disabilities and their families more exclusion and marginalization with the worsening state of emergency.

Stars of Hope Society for the empowerment of women with disabilities and the Social and Economic Policies Monitor (Al Marsad), call -in the light of what is stated in this position paper- that the government proceed to address the following issues:

- Access for women and girls with disabilities to education, preserving the rights of labor and its output, health, secure the social protection of as permitted by the state of emergency, and that the ministries concerned with contingency plans to address the inclusion of women with disabilities to ensure their access to treatment, medicine, food, drink and a dignified life.
- The involvement of relevant institutions and organizations of persons with disabilities in the decision-making process during the state of emergency, concerning the rights and the needs and priorities of persons with disabilities in general, and women with disabilities in particular.
- Provide a protective umbrella for women and women with disabilities and their families who do not fall within the ambit of different cash assistance programs, for different reasons, to include women with disabilities so they will be able to ensure basic food and pharmaceutical needs.
- Providing medicine and medical supplies, rehabilitation and treatment for women with disabilities in accordance with the standards of the World Health Organization for dealing with the Corona virus, and the rehabilitation of hospitals, clinics and medical staff to deal with them without exposing them The risk of infection, or delaying their treatment process, which is linked to their various disabilities.
- Harmonize information about advice to reduce the spread of coronavirus infection, discipline plans and adhere to general guidelines, and the services provided, in multiple and varied forms to reach all types of disabilities, such as including sign language in the daily briefing on epidemic developments in Palestine so that people with hearing disabilities can Keep up with it.
- Include the protection of women and girls with disabilities from violence as a priority in all campaigns and programs aimed at eliminating violence against women, at the local and national levels.
- Adapt distance learning to the special needs of persons with different disabilities, and develop a distance education strategy for male and female students with disabilities.

[1] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics .2018/12/3 .The Palestinian Statistics issued a press release on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

[2] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics .2019/12/3 .The Palestinian Statistics issues a press release on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

[3] Previous source