



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		26 February 2010
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Biographies		
Organization Chart	Israel: Violence against women, including legal recourse, response by government authorities and services available to victims of violence	
Employment	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
Legal and Policy		
References	Violence against women	
Publications		
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division	According to the United States (US) Department of State's <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008</i> , domestic violence against women is problematic (25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5). <i>Country Reports 2008</i> further states that, between January and September 2008, spousal abuse reports received by the Israeli government totalled 13,612 (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5). According to a United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) article, Women Against Violence (WAV), an Arab non-governmental organization (NGO), states that roughly 42 percent of cases of violence against women occur in the home (30 July 2008). The Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW), an organization dedicated to the rights of Palestinian women and the peace process (JCW n.d.a), states that domestic violence is prevalent in Palestinian society (ibid. n.d.b).	
Immigration Division		
Immigration Appeal Division		
Decisions		
Forms		
Statistics		
Research		
Research Program	In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel (ARCCI), a non-profit organization that represents the nine Israeli Rape Crisis Centers (RCCs), provided the following information on sexual violence in Israel:	
National Documentation Packages	In the year 2008, approximately 38,000 calls were made to Rape Crisis Centers out of which approximately 8,000 were new calls reporting sexual abuse.	
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets	In Israel... the statistics show that one in every three women has been sexually abused, as well as one in every six men. One in every four women has been raped, and one in six women has been abused by incestual relations. (4 Feb. 2010)	
Responses to Information Requests		
Recent Research	In a 20 August 2009 article, WAV notes that its call centre statistics indicate that 41 percent of sexual abuse victims were under 18 years of age at the time of the abuse.	
Media Centre		
News		
Information Sheets	<i>Country Reports 2008</i> states that from January to September 2008, there were "796 open rape files, 342 prosecutions, and six convictions" (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5).	
Media Relations		
Proactive Disclosure	Both <i>Country Reports 2008</i> and the <i>Observer</i> report on the harassment of Haredi women by "modesty patrols" (also "modesty police") (ibid.; <i>Observer</i> 21	

Sept. 2008). The *Observer* states in a 21 September 2008 article that "modesty police" are self-appointed and that there have been "a string of assaults over the past two years against Jewish women accused of immoral behaviour in the city," including verbal and physical attacks that occur while riding the bus. The same article notes that a member of a modesty patrol in the Mea Shearim area of Jerusalem "admitted to slashing the tires of women who had driven into the neighbourhood who, he said, were indecently dressed" (*Observer* 21 Sept. 2008). In another incident, a woman was physically assaulted by several men who questioned her regarding her relationships with men (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5; *Observer* 21 Sept. 2008). *Country Reports 2008* notes that, in June 2008, a modesty patrol allegedly threw acid on the face of a 14-year-old girl (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5).

Legal recourse

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the ARCCI Representative stated that "Israel is a country with a strong, Western legal system and therefore violence is treated as a criminal offense" (4 Feb. 2010). According to *Country Reports 2008*, "rape is illegal and the law doubles the penalty if the perpetrator assaults or rapes a relative" (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5). *Country Reports 2008* mentions the following laws with respect to violence against women:

- the Equality of Women Law, which "provides equal rights for women and protection from violence, harassment, exploitation and trafficking" (*ibid.*);
- the Prevention of Stalking Law (*ibid.*; see also Kayan 2008); and
- the Prevention of Family Violence Law (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5; see also Kayan 2008).

Furthermore, the Rights of Victims of Crimes Law addresses the rights of victims through the various stages of a criminal case (Israel n.d.a; see also Kayan 2008).

With respect to legal recourse, WAV questions the capacity of the judicial and police system to address "repetitive cases" of domestic violence, citing an incident in which a repeat domestic violence offender assaulted his 13-year-old daughter (20 Aug. 2009).

Response by government authorities

The Israeli Knesset Committee on the Status of Women, a permanent committee, addresses a number of women's issues, including violence against women (Israel n.d.b). *Country Reports 2008* states that the Ministry of Social Affairs operates a hotline and a shelter for victims of violence (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5). According to a report submitted by Israel to the UN Human Rights Committee in July 2008, social workers are employed at eleven police stations throughout the country to assist with domestic violence complaints (Israel 21 Nov. 2008, 29). *Country Reports 2008* notes that a police call centre was available to communicate information to victims regarding their cases (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5). According to the Israeli government report submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee, the Ministerial Committee to Combat Domestic Violence "operates an internet portal for women, children, and male victims of domestic violence" which contains relevant websites and pertinent information (21 Nov. 2008, 29).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the ARCCI Representative stated that the ARCCI receives 30 percent of its budget for its RCCs from Israeli government grants (4 Feb. 2010). L.O. Combat Violence Against Women, an organization that provides shelters, hotlines and legal assistance related to domestic violence issues, notes that government funding to its programs has not increased at the same rate as has the cost of living in Israel (n.d.).

Services available

According to *Country Reports 2008*, women's groups provided services such as counselling, crisis intervention, legal assistance and shelters (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 5). Kayan Feminist Organization, an organization that advocates for Palestinian-Israeli women, provides legal assistance and works on policy issues relevant to Arab women, such as the upgrading of police emergency phone lines to include an Arabic language option (n.d.). L.O. Combat Violence Against Women operates shelters for women and children in Herzliya, Hadera and Rishon as well as hotlines in Hebrew and Russian (n.d.).

In the Israeli government report submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee, the government of Israel provides the following information on shelters available to victims of domestic violence:

Protection from violence is provided by 14 shelters for battered women, established in different locations throughout the country. Due to their distinct cultural and religious needs, two shelters have been specially designated for Arab women, and one for ultra-Orthodox Jewish women. Furthermore, two shelters are accessible to the physically disabled, one of those serving the Arabic population. Together, these shelters provide emergency intervention for nearly 1,600 women and children annually. (Israel 21 Nov. 2008, 26)

In an article which comments on Israeli Ministry of Welfare policy on women's issues, WAV states that its crisis centre is "the only center for Arab women inside Israel" and as such deals with "all the calls from Arab women who are victims to all kinds of violence..." (7 Sept. 2009). WAV's crisis hotline, open 24 hours, is one of three Arabic-language hotlines in Israel (WAV 4 May 2009). WAV also operates programs such as the Shelter for Battered Women and their Children, the Halfway House for Young Women in Distress and the Victim Witness Program (ibid.). The Victim Witness Program assigns a person to women victims to assist them with the judicial process (ibid.). In the opinion of WAV, there are not enough social workers to "reach all girls in crisis" in Arab municipalities (ibid. 7 Sept. 2009). WAV also notes that there is only one shelter, with a capacity of 12 persons, to assist Arab girls in crisis aged 12 to 25 years (ibid.).

With respect to sexual violence in particular, the ARCCI Representative stated in correspondence with the Research Directorate that its "Rape Crisis Centers give legal consultation and advice to victims of sexual violence who turn to the RCCs" and "also accompany those who are interested in assistance with criminal proceedings (police, courts, etc.)" (4 Feb. 2010). In addition to the Nazareth Center for Arab Women and the Center for Religious Women in Jerusalem, the ARCCI centres are located in Kiryat Shmona, Haifa, Ra'anana, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Be'er Sheva and Eilat (ARCCI n.d.). The ARCCI also provides professional therapy, preventive education and outreach, training courses and a 24-hour crisis line in numerous languages including Hebrew, English, Russian, Arabic and Amharic (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact an official from the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and representatives of Adalah, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), Assiwar, B'Tselem, Kayan-Feminist Organization and Women Against

Violence (WAV) were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Adalah, Amnesty International (AI), The Arab Association for Human Rights, Assiwar, The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), B'Tselem, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), Human Rights Watch, Israel Ministry of Justice, The Mossawa Center - The Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel, Sikkuy - The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel, United Nations (UN) Division for the Advancement of Women, Women Living Under Muslim Law (WLUML).

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