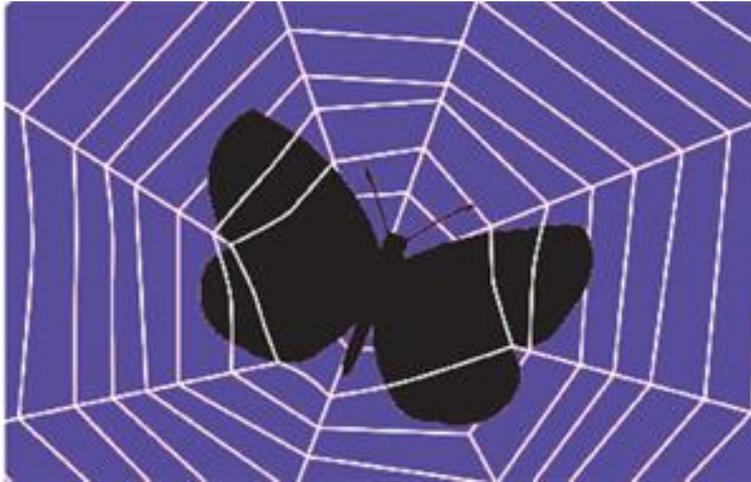


Report on Violence against Bedouin Women



Author: Adv. Insaf Abu-Shareb

Editors: Adv. Keren Shemesh-Perlmutter and Dorit Abramovich

March 2013



Introduction

This report examines the phenomenon of domestic violence against Arab Bedouin women in the south of Israel. The report describes the scope of the violence, its components, its characteristics, the factors driving it, and the silence about this phenomenon. This silence is the result of the lack of response by the Arab Bedouin population and the state authorities who, in the best case, do not provide a good response, or in the worst case, deliberately ignore this problem. The report presents information about the ongoing violence that Arab Bedouin women experience from their spouses or relatives.

The report was researched and written as the result of the NGO Itach-Maaki's understanding of the total lack of information on Arab Bedouin women in the records of the state authorities. In most of the data reported by state agencies, the field "minority" encompasses all non-Jewish women, and therefore it is impossible sort out the records to accurately estimate the extent of domestic violence against Arab Bedouin women specifically. Moreover, the social barriers in the Arab Bedouin population, coupled with systemic barriers in the form of a lack of response and support from the state, prevent many women from revealing the distress they experience about the constant violence against them. Many hide their secret and live with constant shame.

This report is the first document to reveal data on domestic violence against Arab Bedouin women. As written above, the information in this report relies on the information that Itach-Maaki obtained via its Women's Rights Center and the women who approach us.

The Arab population in the Negev numbers approximately 200,000. Half of the population lives in villages that are recognized by the government, and half live in unrecognized villages. Women constitute about 50% of the Arab population in the Negev.

This report is based on information gathered from questionnaires and inquiries carried out by Itach-Maaki. Since 2006, Arab Bedouin women have been turning to the organization's Bedouin Women Rights Center located in Beer Sheva. The Center was established in mid-2006. Since its establishment until now, about 2,000 Bedouin women have contacted the Center, and Itach-Maaki has assisted and provided legal representation for these women.

In 2011, approximately 400 Bedouin women turned to the Center. The most common reason for coming to the Center was due to economic hardship and inquiries about socio-economic rights. About a third of the women turned to the Center because the National Insurance Institute denied them benefits.

After learning about violence from the women who turned to us, we were able to write the text of an in-depth questionnaire aimed at examining the phenomenon of domestic violence against Arab Bedouin women in the Negev. The decision to examine this phenomenon lies in the fact that the deepest distress of these women stems from their subordinate position in the society where they live, and that the state does not provide them with solutions in the form of assistance and protection. The harm done to them by the violence is overwhelming and their exposure to violence is high. All of this leaves them isolated and left to suffer in a forced silence against the violence directed at them.

The text of the questionnaire was a joint project completed by Dr. Henriette Dahan – Kalev, Department of Political Science at Ben Gurion University, and Attorney Insaf Abu Shareb, the director of Itach Maaki's Rights Center in the Negev. The questionnaire aims at reaching a comprehensive and reliable perspective on the phenomenon and its characteristics, as well as painting a picture of the violent reality of Arab Bedouin women.

The qualitative research that serves as the basis for this report was conducted in 2010 and relies on a representative sample of 33 out of 2000 Bedouin women that have turned to Itach-Maaki since 2006.

The qualitative research was done through a questionnaire and through personal interviews, and it includes a large amount of data that can be used as a foundation for further primary research. It provides a complete and multi-faceted view of the reality of daily life for Bedouin women in general. More specifically, it provides an inside look at Bedouin women coping with the cycle of violence.

The women who were surveyed are of different ages, and they live in both recognized and unrecognized villages. In addition to the questionnaire and interviews, data from different authorities was gathered. There were also meetings and interviews conducted with other women, NGOs and professionals.

In addition to the Women's Rights Center in the Negev, there were many other women who helped prepare the study. These women include members of Bedouin women's organizations, specifically, the Desert Princess Rahat Association, which is a local women's organization that seeks to help and empower women.

Target sample of women who participated in the study:

50% of the women who responded to the questionnaire were ages 17-35, and 50% of the women ranged in ages from 35-63. 89% of women are housewives and lack professional



training as well as paid work. The only source of income for these women is the support of their spouse or the public assistance (welfare) paid to them by the National Insurance Institute.

It should be emphasized that it is not possible to estimate the extent of violence against Arab Bedouin women precisely due to the state's lack of information and data on them. This data includes various statistics on 'minorities' in general, which is not derived from the information on the status and position of Arab Bedouin women in the Negev. Moreover, the social barriers among the Bedouin population together with the systemic barriers, in the form of lack of support and response to these women, prevent many women from exposing and reporting the violence against them.

Since the study only includes the women who came to the Center for assistance, it can be assumed that the picture is even more severe for Bedouin women in the general population, which includes women who may not be aware of their rights and therefore cannot exercise them. These women are even too invisible for official statistics.

The report consists of both a description of the characteristics of the occurrence of domestic violence and the cited testimonies of the women victims.

At the end of this report we present recommendations designed to ensure that state authorities work to take responsibility for the lives of Arab Bedouin women in the Negev and reduce the scope of this serious problem.

The Status of Arab Bedouin Women in the Negev in a Patriarchal Society

Bedouin society is composed of tribes. Each tribe consists of several clans, and these clans include extended families. In the tribal structure, the father is the patriarch and authoritarian. He makes decisions on any family issues and is responsible for the relations among his family members as well as relations between his family and others. The women in the Bedouin family are subject to all the patriarch's actions and to many restrictions, including restriction of any contact between outsiders, which in effect forces them to live in isolation.

Patriarchal structure is particularly evident in the family context. For example, a man is able to divorce his wife at any time, for any reason, whereas this right is not given to women. Even worse, a woman may find herself divorced without her knowledge. The abandonment of a woman by her husband means stripping her of all her rights in the marriage as a result of divorce: rights at home, assets and financial rights, which include automatically stripping her of custody of her children based on the traditional belief that it is in the children's best

interest to live with their father. (See: WAC report, Arab women in the Negev Reality and Challenges, 2005, '103; 103, 100, صفحة 2005, واقع وتحد, 2005). تقرير معا: المرأة العربية في النقب: (واقع وتحد, 2005, صفحة 100, 103, '103).

In Bedouin societies there is a social norm that a woman must be removed from the arena of males and prevent her from participating in any decision making. (See: Reliance on the Labour Court: Bel (Bush) in 1447/00 Abu Ashebah Odeh v. National Insurance Institute, is 2/10/02, out of a seminar on Bedouin in memory of the late Isaac Netzer, issue 24, February 93, the words Dr. Majid Al-Atawneh of the Social Services Bureau Director Bedouin, Abu Basma Regional Council regarding: the relationship between the status of Bedouin women and the psychological status).

Polygamy in Bedouin Society

Bedouin society practices polygamy. Marriage to more than one woman takes place as a cultural practice. According to this aspect of the culture, marriage to another woman does not require registration or a marriage contract. In many cases, the husband cannot be forced to divorce his first wife to marry another woman because he is socially allowed to practice polygamy. Moreover, the man's social status increases with the number of women he marries and the more children he has. (See: Joseph Ben-David, the Bedouin in Israel - Social aspects and land, Land Policy Institute and the use of land, Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2004, 125).

According to Islamic law, the Koran allows a Muslim man to marry four wives, provided that there is total equality between them. Penal Law - 1977 prohibits formal polygamy, but does not eliminate another question of polygamous marriages that took place and does not take into consideration marriages without a registration. This law does not deal at all with the phenomenon of polygamy, leaving many women vulnerable as a result. It should be emphasized that the economic situation of polygamous families is difficult, in part because most women do not have paid work due to the high number of children in the family. In many cases where the man marries more than one woman, he is used to sharing his life only with the last woman he married and their children, therefore only giving the most recent wife and their children economic support. However, the older women he has married are cast out by him and are left without any financial support. (See: Einat Albin, Income Support for the Alternative Family - Polygamous Families as a case study, Studies in Gender and Feminism, Nevo Publishing Ltd., Tss"z 2007, pp. 617, 624-625).

Bedouin women are unlikely to initiate divorce proceedings, both for fear of losing custody of their children and because the severe social stigma that is imposed on a divorced woman is magnified if she initiates the divorce. (See: Einat Albin, Income Support for the Alternative

Family - Polygamous Families as a case study, Studies in Gender and Fmnizim, Nevo Publishing Ltd., Tss"z 2007, pp. 617, 631-332).

The reality of a polygamous marriage creates deep distress for these women. There is a hierarchical arrangement of the women married to the same man, with the position of the first woman who married him of a lesser status than his later wives. This hierarchical relationship also creates a rift between the women themselves because of their status differences. As mentioned above, when the husband marries another woman, the first woman who married him suffers a significant deterioration of her economic situation and emotional abandonment. Her self-esteem is depleted.

Many of these women experience a worsening of their health due to the isolation, mental stress, and the difficult economic climate. There is further deterioration in the condition of the first wife's children because the children of the most recent wife are given priority to the detriment of the first wife's children. As a result of this neglect, these children face a decrease of interest and work in their studies and a high dropout rate. (R ' : Elkernawi, A, Graham, J.R. and Alkernawi, S. Social work practices with polygamous families Child and Adolescent SW Journal. Vol. 14, 6 1997).

It is not possible to accurately estimate the extent of the effects of polygamy among Bedouins in Israel, mainly because a large proportion of polygamous marriages are not official and therefore not recorded with the authorities.

Constant Violence from many sources against girls and Arab Bedouin women:

Amina, (a pseudonym), 30, is a mother of five small children and lives in an unrecognized village in the Negev. Amina was raised as an orphan, without a mother. She recently became aware of the fact that when she was a baby, her father divorced her mother and she was turned over to her paternal grandmother. When she reached the age of six, her father's latest wife took her to be her maid. With tears choking her voice, Amina says: "I remember as a child ... I always got beatings from my father and his wife. They would beat me severely and drove me out of the house until I was forced to sleep and live in the sheep pen."

Amina tells of her early marriage and her experience of violence in the past: "My marriage was an escape from home and my hope was to finally find a home ... two years after my marriage, after I had born children, my husband became violent. He was suspicious of me and started to belittle and threaten me that I am just another woman, a thing that can be easily replaced. For six years this was his behavior, his attacks on me, assaults that leave real injuries, beating me with a whip, dragging me and tearing my hair, raping me violently, threatening to burn me and kill me with a knife, all this in addition to the words of condemnation, insults, and curses. Because of this, I tried to commit suicide several times.



As a result of the violence my nose has been broken and my face has many scratches, and I have excruciating pain in my ear.

My husband prevented me from going to the hospital for fear that the violence would be revealed, but one of the times he beat me so severely he had to take me to the hospital, and they suspected there was violence involved. He took me from the hospital and that was the end of the case. Both my father and my brother did not support me and instead gave support to my husband, and on one occasion when he severely attacked me, my brother took me to a private doctor and said I fell ... "

Amina has expressed concern that her husband will murder her, and she fears her father and brother. She is still afraid to seek help or complain. Amina completely ruled out the possibility of a battered women's shelter because of the shame of it and the fear of being murdered.

Amina felt completely dependent on her spouse. Now she fears for the fate of her children and therefore believes that she lacks the ability to free herself from the cycle of violence in which she lives. Following the violence committed against her, Amina is faced with severe psychological distress and suicidal thoughts, "Even into my bedroom and into my dreams the violence I experienced penetrates. I dream of them, and the mental anguish, they are seen before me as the embodiment of reality, I felt my body trembling at these horrible sights, as if reality refuses to allow me to sleep peacefully ... to get a few quiet moments ... "

Amina summarizes her life as a disaster and tragedy, and sometimes she dreams of another life – one without violence: "I'd like to close my eyes, forget, erase everything, open them and wake up to a different reality, quiet, calm. I cannot understand why this is happening to me. Why I must live in a sense of fear and humiliation ... I ask myself every day what I did, where I failed, what happened to me, but cannot find answers to my questions ... "

Amina's story is the story of many Bedouin women who deal with violence for years from many directions. Their fathers and brothers exposed these women to childhood violence, and then they become victims of violence at the hands of the men they married. In cases where their husbands abandoned them, they suffer from family violence of the 'new' father of their children.

There are many sources and many components of violence: harsh verbal abuse, physical violence, economic violence, sexual violence, and emotional abuse. Acts of violence against girls and women take place both openly and secretly, but their main characteristic is the continuation over the years, as mentioned by numerous sources.

Another feature of the violence is an internalization of the reality by girls, adolescents, and Bedouin women. The social norm among the Bedouin population is that a woman must not expose or report about the violence committed against her. A woman who does so is expected to be excommunicated and ostracized from her family and may be killed for breaching her duty of silence. These norms, coupled with the incompetence of the authorities, as described below, cause victims to live in a secret shadow of systematic violence.

One of the distinguishing marks of violence against Arab Bedouin women is being a victim of ongoing violent acts. 96.9% of women surveyed described acts of repeated violence, or in their words: "It's hard to count" the number of violent incidents against them. Recurring violence against them is due, in part, to exposure to both community violence and the authorities. Thus the attacker remains protected from any sanctions against him and free to continue his violence.

Meanwhile, 78.7% of women surveyed have internalized the social norm of man's perceived superiority over them, and therefore they feel they are to blame for the violence directed against them. Because of the necessary internalization of their reality of the violence that involves the concept of male superiority, most women do not assign primary importance to the violence against them and underestimate the influence it has on their lives. 30% of women surveyed reported that their father, brother, and spouse attacked them concurrently.

79% of women surveyed were attacked by 'only' a spouse.

51.5% of women surveyed reported that they first experienced violence as children or young adolescents at their parents' house. As adults they were then victims of violence committed by their spouses.

90% of women surveyed were victims of multiple types of violence at the same time: physical violence, psychological violence, economic violence, and sexual violence.

90.9% of women surveyed said that the violence against them occurs in public, in front of their children and neighbors, and the norm of the act teaches the attacker and the community that it is acceptable. The violence also serves as a mechanism for warning and controlling other women.

From the aforementioned in this chapter, government programs are required to deal with):

1. Raising the issue of violence against women among the whole Bedouin community, and this must be designed to create a process of changing the social norms.
2. Raising awareness and empowering Arab Bedouin women, while creating a supportive



female community to enhance the power of every woman to escape the cycle of violence.
3. Establishing institutional support mechanisms to ensure assistance to and protection for victims of violence, to encourage them to expose and report the violence against them, and ensure their protection from their attackers and the community at large.

Halt the Violence - From Repression to Recognition

As stated in the previous chapter, victims of violence attribute little importance to the violence, partly out of the daily struggle for economic survival and partly to care for and satisfy the needs of their children. The violence directed against them is usually seen in their eyes as a 'private matter' and one that should not be made public. They don't believe that the community has any responsibility towards them. (See: Hajj - Yahya, from, Sedan, A, (2007) "Battered Women collective societies' intervention and empowerment issues. Social and Welfare, deja, 3, pp. 423-451).

It should be emphasized that even in cases of serious ongoing violence that results in necessary medical treatment, few women still report it. Women said that even when their patience had reached its end, and it seemed even more unbearable, they found themselves bound by the fear of the consequences of exposing the violence and the consequences that would follow them. They feared that if their violent spouse were to be arrested, they and their children would be without any economic support. They also feared the ramifications and excommunication from their family, tribe, and community. 67% of women surveyed in the report said that they did not report the violence, preferring to attempt to avoid lives of poverty for themselves and their children.

64% of women surveyed in the report said that violence against them was placed as an issue of lesser importance than economic hardship, and they live in total dependence on the livelihood of their spouses. Very few women report violence committed against them for several factors including this total dependency on their spouse and the acceptance of the cultural idea that their lives and needs as women are insignificant. 65% of women victims of violence surveyed in the report do not contact anyone for assistance or report the violence to the police. There were times when there were attempts to 'reconcile', when the women themselves had to be represented in a "Sulchah" (reconciliation ceremony) by their father or their brother, and their voice was not present in any of these Sulchot'. 79% of women surveyed in the report said that they did not receive any support or backing from their families. Lack of support comes from the widespread belief among the Bedouin population that the woman is the one responsible for the violence directed against her, and that this violence apparently resulted from her improper behavior. Improper behavior can be in the form of lack of acceptance of her husband's or father's authority. About 21% of women

surveyed in the report said that they did receive support from their mothers. This support that may have helped emotionally, but did not help to eliminate the violence, as stated, due to marginality of women in Bedouin society.

The reality is that victims of violence learn not to tell, not to ask for help, and not to report the violence against them. This reality requires them to develop mechanisms of repression and denial for the violence from which they suffer. 80% of women surveyed in the report said that they learned to internalize the violence against them as an integral part of life and a decree from heaven. That is why the women surveyed in the report told of violence against them only when asked directly about their past. They did not initiate a conversation on the subject.

The older age group surveyed in the report, women aged 52-63, said that the intensity of the violence against them had come and gone with advancement in age. This is because they are perceived as a less dangerous object and less "sexually attractive" as they advance in age. The younger group surveyed, girls and women ages 17-50, told of more frequent violence against them.

Physical violence

85% of women surveyed said that the report exposed the various acts of physical violence, and this violence to varying degrees:

Hitting, pushing, kicking, choking attempts, mutilation, throwing objects, slapping, knocking to the ground, biting, hair pulling, and the use of sharp objects such as knives, sticks, and belts. The most common physical injuries identified in battered women were swelling, fractures, bruises, wounds, and black and blue marks.

64% of women surveyed in the report were being attacked to the point of requiring medical treatment. Only some of them sought medical attention. Those that did gave other reasons than domestic violence for the injuries. Most of those who received medical help did so only several days after the injury.

95% of abused women expressed a lack of willingness to enter a shelter for battered women because of their shame and fear of the community's action toward them and their children for seeking shelter.

Mental/Emotional/Psychological Violence

In her testimony, Fatima (a pseudonym) tells her story about the wounds and scars left from her experience of violence and how her journey of suffering ended with the loss of her children and the unyielding imposition of social norms.

"My mother herself was a battered woman and she lit herself on fire when I was 12 years old .. I do not know anything about her... I grew up neglected, and I served as a shepherd for my father's wives who would "tattle" on me to my father and would beat me... When I grew up they married me to my cousin who also beat me on my head with a stick and strangled me, and he blamed me that I was not as good as my own mother. He used to take income support payments and used the money as he wished. My mental state had deteriorated... I was tired... I was very hurt, humiliated and destitute. I could not go to therapy because of the stigma of it. After I had complained against him to the police, the family decided to punish him and chased him away and took away my small children. Today I live with my father. I am very sorry I complained and now suffer from not having the strength to resist what was dictated to me ... that I let them take my children"...

It is important to emphasize that Fatima's husband was tried and convicted for his violent actions, but his punishment was only community service.

91% of women surveyed in the report said they suffered and/or are currently suffering from psychological violence.

Instances of mental violence are aimed at reducing a woman's sense of self. Psychological acts of violence against women include the use of vulgar words, shouts, insults, swearing, spitting, scorn and ridicule, and the deliberate negligence of women, including preventing them from doing as they wish. This includes preventing women from working, studying, and preventing their denial of marriage. Some of the main characteristics of psychological violence are its frequency, its quick escalation, and its transition into routine.

One of the severe effects of emotional abuse is a drastic reduction of the victim's ability to function. Many women said that the violence they experienced had impaired their ability to raise their children due to the introduction of stress, anger, crying, nightmares, and experience of lack of control. Some said they were more nervous and were more likely to scream at their children and found it difficult to tolerate their children. About a quarter of the women victims of mental violence received antidepressants and sedatives. According to these women, they fear that these drugs cause them to feel tired during the day and damage their ability to function as housewives and mothers. Two-thirds of the women who continued to receive no medical treatment or medical follow-up have stopped the

medication on their own.

76% of women surveyed reported that they did not consider seeking medical treatment when emotional violence was used against them because they feared that their family would label them as "crazy." According to them, it is more important that the appearance of their family is kept up in order to maintain the family's integrity and the lives of everyone else, even at their own expense.

A study that examined postpartum depression among Bedouin women in 2011 found that one third of women showed signs of postpartum depression versus less than 10% among Jewish women. 8% experienced suicidal thoughts in conjunction with risk factors of polygamy, lack of the partner's help, low education, lack of employment, etc. ... (See: Samira Alapiomi Ziadna "relationship between family characteristics and socio - demographic and postpartum depression among the Negev Bedouin women").

76% of interviewed women were not allowed to participate in the decision of whom they would marry and if they would marry.

Recommendations:

- Extensive research needs to be done on the suicide rate among Arab-Bedouin women.
- Local mental health clinics need to be established, which will include staff, physicians, and specialists with expertise and knowledge on the Bedouin community in general and Bedouin women in particular.
- The Ministry of Health is responsible for training staff and skilled personnel to deal with Bedouin women's distress, HMOs, and family health centers.
- Under the jurisdiction Ministry of Health programs must be developed and initiated to aid and support Bedouin women coping with mental distress from the violence against them.

Sexual violence

24% of women surveyed in the report said sexual violence had been used against them. Only one woman admitted that her partner had sexually assaulted her, and this was admitted only after she fled into hiding.

The women interviewees were wary to disclose the sexual violence committed against them, especially in cases of rape because it is seen as a social taboo that should not be discussed. Few of them said that they had been victims of rape or attempted rape by a spouse. They described that many of these rape cases occur when the spouse goes to live with another woman, and then abandons them and their children, as well as taking away financial support. That spouse then tends to surprise the woman he left (by coming back) and forces her to have sex. The victim does not object to the rape and does not complain about him because it is a social norm, she is still his wife, and therefore, still considered his property. Only in cases where the rape results in a pregnancy is she forced to reveal the fact that the rape occurred.

It should be noted that very few women admit to being victims of sexual violence not because of force or violation of family honor, but because they believe it is the norm. This is also why those most vulnerable to sexual violence tend to repress it and treat it as an insignificant event. Women are seen as being the property of their fathers, brothers, and spouses. This acts as the basis for the assumption that most victims of sexual violence are also associated with the inherent power relations between themselves and the men in their lives. Only through structured processes of raising awareness and strengthening of women will the extent of the phenomenon then be revealed.

Economic violence

Vidacha (not her real name) completed 12 years of schooling and works today. She is married to a working man. Vidacha is a victim of physical, emotional, and financial violence. Her husband disowned her of her wages.

She describes the multi-level violence committed against her:

"Not only does he attack, cursing and insulting me, but he also forces me to give him the wages from my work... He threatens to marry another woman... I did not even tell my family... I'm afraid to be forced into a divorce, and leave my children and go back to my parents. I am afraid of him... and his family and therefore cannot file a complaint... I tried to do everything with him to change the situation and to get him to stop hitting me but all my attempts failed... I always feel guilty and feel that he's scrutinizing every little thing I do..."

Only 3% of all women surveyed in the report are working women, while 89% of women are housewives, with no profession and no paid employment. Their only source of income is from their spouse's work or income supplement benefit paid to them by the National Insurance Institute.



30% of women are missing some sort of education, 52% of women have only a primary school education, and 18% have a high school education.

The man of the family is responsible for supporting the family. He controls the economic resources and gives the woman money at his will. 79% of women surveyed in the report said that they do not have access to money. In addition, they are not allowed to exit their homes without the approval and consent of their spouse, parent, or brothers. When they get permission to leave their homes, they must be accompanied by a male family member, whose job is to save them "from conversations with strangers or inappropriate behavior." Many women say that their partner goes shopping on his own, refusing to include and consult with his wife with regard to the needs of home and their needs as a family. This absolute economic dependence on the partner forces the woman to completely surrender to what society dictates for her and adds to keeping the secret of the violence committed against her.

Women have accepted their role as only mothers and the other roles they are involved in- raising children and household chores. Another barrier to employment is that women are not free to leave the tribal area for fear of losing their children as a result. Prohibition to leave the tribal area also applies to women separated or divorced.

Damage to Arab Bedouin Women by the National Insurance Institute

Women living in the framework of an allegedly polygamous family are primarily mothers, and effectively serve as the only parent. Despite the fact that the National Insurance Institute recognizes polygamous families, and as such sees the women as a partner in the family unit. The NII treats the women as if they have financial support, and therefore they are not entitled to a pension. It should be remembered, however, that most women living in a polygamous family are abandoned by their husbands who leave to live with their most recent wife and leave the older wives and children without any family or financial support.

According to the criteria of the National Insurance Institute, all of the buildings - including houses, sheds, tents adjacent to one another- are considered one roof. These criteria remain valid even when the couple divorced in Shariya Court, and the Court held that the house would be divided between them. These cases also confirm to the National Insurance Institute that the couple is still living under one roof, and therefore the woman is not entitled to a pension and does not get recognized as a single mother.

It should be emphasized that most of the Bedouin women, even those who are divorced from their spouses, remain living in the same complex of their divorced husband, while



maintaining a separation, whether separated by floors or a wall. These divorced women do not receive any financial support from their former spouse.

The same situation also applies to women who are abandoned by their partners, even if not by divorce, in favor of another woman.

These women are forced to live close to the spouse in order to stay close to their children, and thus the same social constraints are imposed on the women living under the shadow of the man, even if they are separated from or abandoned by him. The criteria of the National Insurance Institute effectively discriminates against Bedouin women and prevents them from receiving the income support benefit as a single parent. The organization Itach-Maaki petitioned the High Court in 2010 demanding the change of these criteria. In the petition in HCJ 1480/10, Itach - Maaki sought to erase the test that invalidates the woman's right to receive the benefit when she lived near the father of her children and to include tests which recognize and take into account these circumstances in the lives of Bedouin women. The court instructed us to conduct negotiation directly with National Insurance Institute on the criteria, and adapting and modifying them to the special ways of Bedouin women's lives.

Other criteria that discriminate against Bedouin women receiving benefits from the NII are rooted in Article 6 (c) of the Income Support. Under this section, when a couple is entitled to a pension, it is usually paid to the husband. This section adds that a woman is dependent on the benefit her partner receives, whether married or separated from him. Because of the discrimination in this law, **the organization Itach-Maaki filed an legislative proposal (Amendment spouse benefit) in 2009.**

The National Insurance Institute expressed an unwillingness to change the procedures because, as far as they are concerned, only a minority of women are in a cycle of violence among the general population. They believe there is no justification for changing the law and regulations. In the summary of the meeting with the organization Itach-Maaki-dated 19/12/11 with the institution responsible for the pension system - Ms. Orna and Rakowitzki agreed that the institution should split the pension proactively whenever there is a report of violence, and/or a statement of pension claims of violence, and/or a request by the plaintiff to be recognized as separated.

According to the bill, a woman could receive the benefit directly from the National Insurance Institute. Apart from the relative economic freedom that will allow women to benefit by using it, they will be able to open their own bank account to receive the pension. This will

allow the NII to strengthen and empower Arab Bedouin women. This will also add legitimacy for women to separate economically and to reduce the dependence on the existing partner.

Institutions Inadequate Treatment, Prevention and Enforcement in relation to Violence against Women

The Domestic Violence Prevention Law of 1991 gives battered women the right to request a protection order against a family member who has attacked her. Sharia Courts do not use the authority vested in them to bring protection orders against family member's attackers. This is because of the tendency of the Sharia Courts to give validity to social conventions that encourage mediation and compromise in order to prevent provocation in the tribal community.

Many Bedouin women are not aware of the existence of the law and the protections it offers. Also, those familiar with the rights granted to them by law refrain from using those rights for fear that the order will not be enforced and therefore would put them at a greater risk of further violence. Moreover, there are no police stations in unrecognized villages, which means that there are no accessible police stations where women can file a complaint.

35% of women surveyed in the report filed a complaint against their attacker, usually after many violent events. 65% of women surveyed in the report did not file a complaint with the police due to the lack of access to a police station, lack of support from their family, and lack of confidence in the various state systems that have proven that they do not recognize the women, their community, or the cultural norms in which they live, and therefore do not have the power to give them the appropriate assistance without endangering them.

60% of women surveyed in the report did not know what a protection order is. Only 12% of women surveyed in the report filed for a protection order.

Deficiencies in the Ministry of Welfare for Bedouin Women

61% of women surveyed in the study said they had contacted social services for assistance but reported dissatisfaction with the lack of support and lack of proper response from these services. It should be noted that centers for the prevention of violence, which are tailored to Bedouin women and their culture, are non-existent, including a lack of Arabic speakers that are specifically trained for this.



Only in 2005, the Center for Peace for the Bedouin Family for the Prevention of Violence was established, sponsored by the organization and set up in the Negev. The central role of the organization was to assist in emergency cases of violence against Bedouin women. This was supposed to work in conjunction with the activities of the social workers at the center to prevent violence. The center was established through a decision made by Dr. Miri Becker, the Regional Ministry of Social Affairs Commissioner. She believes that the referral of Bedouin women to battered women shelters is not a satisfactory solution for them, and there is a need to adapt the solutions to the culture and customs of Bedouin society. In addition, her concept of activities to prevent violence must include both men and women in order to deal effectively with this phenomenon. The center is unable to provide appropriate solutions to the population of battered Bedouin women. The total women who were referred to the center (and set up) were about 80 women per year. The center is located in Beer Sheva, which is far from where the Bedouin women live. The center hired a Jewish social worker who does not speak Arabic. In addition, the head of the Center was a Bedouin Sheikh. It is therefore not surprising that the center has adopted solutions that address the Bedouin culture and tradition, which translates into a lack of recognition of the independence and the rights of women. Another issue was the lack of follow-up of the Bedouin women who turned to the center. The center did not continue to follow the women after their application, especially applications of women from the unrecognized villages, apparently as a result of the fact that the center did not have an all terrain vehicle that could make its way in the villages that have no roads and infrastructure.

In the center there are also two anti-violence groups for women that were started in 2009, and three groups started in 2010. The groups began their activities with about 15 women in each group, but most of the women dropped out and the groups were left with about 3-4 women in each group. The group facilitator is Jewish and does not speak Arabic.

From the disadvantages and barriers that characterized the activities of this center comes the recommendation to establish centers which will be physically accessible to Bedouin women. The centers must be staffed by women professionals who speak Arabic and have a profound knowledge and understanding of the Bedouin population, its culture, and its characteristics. The center needs to develop approaches to accompany women after their application, including a hot line for every woman.

According to Dr. Miri Becker's assessment, every year about 300 to 400 battered Bedouin women are treated by various welfare offices in the Southern District. Few of them complain to the police. From the referrals of women to the center, the association Itach-Maaki suggests that one of the major difficulties in the welfare bureaus activities is the absence of preparedness on the part of managers in the



welfare offices, including social workers, to help the women in the Bedouin Arab community that apply to them.

Women who sought the help of welfare offices and social workers did not receive any response or support when it came to violence. Some women were also not asked about it at all.

Shelters for battered women - Now spread across the country are 13 shelters for battered women and their children. Two are for Arab women and are located in northern Israel, and there is no shelter designed for Bedouin in the Negev. In 2009 a shelter for battered Bedouin Arab women was established in a Dimona apartment, but it was closed because according to social services, there were not enough women to accommodate and she was not adequately protected.

In addition to the lack of a designated shelter for Bedouin Arab women there is a lack willingness on the part of women to contact the shelter. 95% of the participants for this report said they would not turn to a shelter for battered women because of the shame of it from their point of view and for fear of their lives in the absence of an effective system adapted to their culture that prevents the risk to their lives.

Poor Police Treatment

From a meeting with Dr. Miri from 7/11/11, as well as from her article (Cultural Sensitivity or "fig leaf"? Dealing with violence against women in Bedouin society), she describes the lack of proper preparation on the part of the Israeli Police (Police towns in this case) for the proper and effective treatment of Bedouin women victims of violence. A woman complainant had to wait many hours at the station until she received some response that someone had become available to take her complaint. In addition, the police did not rush, to say the least, to arrest the suspects. There are displays of indifference and contempt for the complainants. There are also incorrect assessments as to the level of danger to the life of the complainant. These are some of the reasons that prevent Arab Bedouin women from filing a police complaint about the violence against them.

Evidence of poor police treatment is apparent, among others, from the Prison Data Service, according to which only about 15% of the Bedouin Arab prisoners were serving sentences for domestic assault. Of the total Bedouin Arab men that have complaints filed against them for violence, only 9% of them were convicted.

Analysis of police data on violence against Arab Bedouin women:

Counts of assault by a spouse that caused real injury to a wife:

In 2009, 44 cases were opened regarding violence in Arab Bedouin couples. 10 of these cases were closed due to lack of evidence, and 2 of them were closed due to lack of public interest. 16 cases were sentenced – a verdict was given for them to return - 13 cases had charges brought.

In 2010, 29 cases were opened regarding violence in Arab Bedouin couples violence. 8 of them were closed due to lack of evidence, and 2 of them were closed due to lack of public interest. Only 4 cases were brought to sentencing, and in 12 cases, charges were brought.

Counts of assault by a spouse:

In 2009, 39 cases were opened regarding assault by a spouse. 11 of those cases were closed due to lack of evidence, 1 case was closed due to lack of public interest, 15 cases were sentenced, and 12 cases are still open.

In 2010, a total of 34 cases were opened regarding assault by a spouse. 18 of those cases were closed due to insufficient evidence. Only 3 cases were given a sentence, and 11 cases are still open.

In summarizing the data we find that in 2009, a total of 83 cases of spousal assault were opened, and 24 of these cases were closed due to lack of evidence.

In 2010, only 63 cases were opened, and 28 of these cases were closed.

Cases of sexual crimes/offenses

In 2009 and 2010, cases of individual sex crimes were opened. The majority of these cases were closed due to insufficient evidence. Cases were opened based on charges of abuse, absence of consent, and sodomy without consent.

In 2009, 7 cases were opened. 3 were closed due to lack of evidence and/or lack of public interest.

In 2010, 6 cases were opened. 3 were closed due to insufficient evidence and/or lack of public interest.

Recommendations and Conclusions – Preparation of institutional and governmental assistance for Arab Bedouin women victims of violence

- A. Victims must be allowed to take part in the criminal process and must be given the right to speak.
- B. Raising awareness and education among women about their rights and protections that exist under current legislation.
- C. Special training for Arabic speaking staff in the domestic violence unit of the police who are specifically trained to work with the Arab Bedouin women population.
- D. Development of special programs on domestic violence to be geared toward and held within Arab Bedouin villages and communities.
- E. Development and establishment of hot lines in Arabic which will provide a sympathetic ear and support for battered women.
- F. Accompaniment and representation of battered women to the police stations and courts.



- G. Establishments of safe houses and shelters specifically designed for and culturally tailored to the needs of Arab Bedouin women.
- H. Harsher sentences imposed on spouses both in the form of actual arrests and increased compensation for the victims.
- I. Training of social workers in welfare offices to prevent violence against Arab Bedouin women. Training should include providing information to women about the treatment of and prevention of violence.
- J. Investigation conducted by the Research and Information Center Committee on the implications and effects of violence against Arab Bedouin women in the Negev.
- K. Creation of a database of information and data on violence against Arab Bedouin women, particularly on battered wives.

Summary:

Domestic violence in the Arab Bedouin population is legitimized, first of all, from the social norms customary in the community as well as from the lack of functioning authorities to protect Arab Bedouin women from the violence. Half of the police cases regarding male violence against women are closed due to lack of evidence. The local police units investigating these cases do not speak Arabic and do not have an interpreter. In addition, there is a lack of information and data on domestic violence in the Welfare Department and the court system.

Targeted violence against Arab Bedouin women is closely related to the cultural perception that she is weak and inferior. This in turn results in a deep dependence on the man as the breadwinner, and this consequently is another form of violence a woman experiences. Even from childhood, the women are seen as inferior, under the control of a man, and as the property of a man – be it her father, brothers, or later, her husband. Arab Bedouin women are not allowed to take part in any decision regarding their lives, in any and all areas: how to dress, access to education, authorization for or prohibition from paid work, lack of freedom of movement, being restricted to the compound of her tribe, and so forth.

Violence against Arab Bedouin women is a mechanism of submission based on inherent assumptions and the controlled location of the woman. The women learn to absorb violence against them and internalize it as an essential way of life. Few women have dared to break the cycle of violence, and this is especially true for those who are without support from immediate family. Women who dare to violate the screen of silence pay a heavy price – they are forced to give up their children and are essentially exiled. Some are even murdered.

Targeted violence against Arab Bedouin women affects all aspects of their lives – there is economic violence, physical violence, sexual violence, and emotional violence. Ongoing violence this intense leaves these women completely vulnerable, lowers their health, leaves them with a lack of self-worth and independence, and locks them into a reality from which they cannot escape.

State authorities, whether conscious or not, act as institutional arms that are silencing this problem. This is due in part to the lack of any adequate response by the state and the country's lack of responsibility to the Arab Bedouin community.