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Press Release On The Situation Of Palestinian Women On The Occasion Of Palestinian Women's National Day, October 26th, 2026

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Women's Affairs highlight the situation of Palestinian Women On the Occasion of Palestinian Women's National Day, October 26th, 2026

Under the slogan The Palestinian Woman: Unbreakable Resilience and Unwavering Will

Palestinian Women: Half of Society and Partners in Resilience, Development, and Shaping the Future

On the occasion of the Palestinian Women's Day, observed on October 26th, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs present the key indicators on the conditions of women and girls in Palestine. This comes under exceptional circumstances where the impacts of aggression, displacement, and human loss intersect with pressing economic, social, and health challenges. These indicators underline the critical importance of providing reliable data disaggregated by sex, age, and region to better understand gender gaps, identify key priorities, and guide national policies and policy responses.

Palestinian Women: Deep-Rooted Like the Olive Tree, An Enduring Presence, A Deeply Grounded National Role, and A Resilience that Carries Life and Hope

The Palestinian women occupy an exceptional position not only as half of society, but also as its driving force and a fundamental pillar of its resilience. By the end of 2025, women constituted approximately 49% of the population in Palestine, representing 2.75 million women (1.69 million in the West Bank and 1.06 million in Gaza Strip), reflecting a vibrant demographic presence across Palestine. The Palestinian women play a central role in economic and social development, preserving the household, and strengthening national resilience, bearing increasing burdens under the exceptional circumstances faced by the Palestinian people, and affirming their constant presence in confronting challenges and consolidating the foundations of survival and dignity.

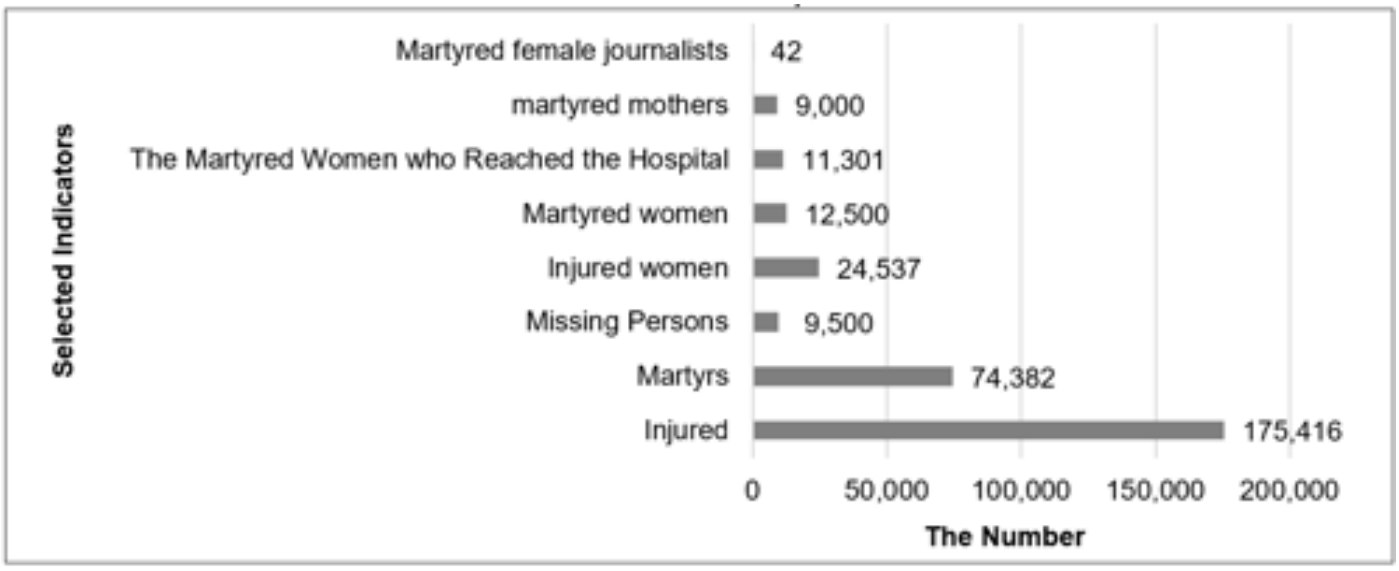
The Ministry of Women's Affairs emphasizes that assessing the reality of the Palestinian women must not stop at documenting the scale of losses and burdens; rather, it must be also recognizing their pivotal role as key partners in national resilience, decision-making, recovery, and reconstruction. Within this framework, as the national mechanism for the advancement of women, the Ministry works to align governmental policies and interventions with the Cross-Sectoral National Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2025–2027), while reinforcing protection, participation, economic empowerment, and accountability. (**Source:** Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2026)

Palestinian Women at the Heart of Genocide: Lives Lost, Existence Ravaged, Rights Violated

Figures released by the Palestinian Ministry of Health showed the unprecedented scale of the humanitarian catastrophe that has befallen the Palestinian people since October 7th, 2023. As of October 12th, 2026, 74,382 Palestinians have been martyred in Gaza Strip. Women have borne a particularly severe share of these losses, with more than 12,500 women martyrs, including 11,301[1] who were brought to hospitals up to October 7th, 2026. The number of martyred mothers has exceeded 9,000, representing a direct blow to the core of the Palestinian household and its social fabric. In addition, 42 women journalists[2] have been martyred, indicating that women have also been targeted in their professional and media roles. The consequences of the aggression do not end there. Women constitute approximately 14% of the 175,416 injured up to October 12th, 2026, while 9,500 remain missing under the rubble, the vast majority of whom are women and children. Direct injuries to women since the start of the Israeli aggression are estimated at approximately 24,537 cases[3], many of whom suffer permanent disabilities, psychological trauma, and repeated displacement, in addition to bearing the burden of caring for their households under harsh conditions. The aggression also resulted in the repeated displacement of more than two million people within Gaza Strip, nearly half of whom are women, in extremely harsh humanitarian conditions.

In parallel, the Israeli occupation continued its aggression in the West Bank, which has led to the martyrdom of 1,216[4] Palestinians since October 7th, 2023, including 28 women, as a result of attacks by the Israeli forces and settlers. This reality confirms that the Palestinian women are still at the heart of the targeting and are paying a heavy price in the battle for survival and existence, up to October 12th, 2026.

Selected Indicators of the Israeli Aggression against Gaza Strip Since October 7th, 2023– October 7th, 2026



In response to these multiple risks, on May 4th, 2026, the Ministry of Women's Affairs launched the National Observatory for Monitoring Violence Against Women as a national, data-driven mechanism for monitoring and analyzing forms of violence and informing policies and interventions based on indicators and identified data gaps. This initiative is being pursued alongside efforts to develop and operationalize the National Referral System for Women Survivors of Violence and to follow up on high-risk cases. Together, these efforts support a shift from addressing cases individually towards establishing an integrated national system for prevention, protection, and accountability. (**Source:** Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2026)

Palestinian Women in Israeli Prisons: Arrest, Torture, and Slow Execution

A report issued by prisoners' organizations[5] reported more than 26,000 arrest cases in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from the beginning of the Israeli aggression on October 7th, 2023, up to October 12th, 2026, including 800 women[6]. In Gaza Strip, accurate information is unavailable due to the crime of enforced disappearance that the Israeli occupation continues to commit, with the number of arrests estimated to be in the thousands. On October 12th, 2026, the number of detainees in Israeli occupation prisons stood at 9,300, including 87 female detainees, 21 of whom were held under administrative detention. All of them are subjected to a comprehensive system of systematic abuse and torture.

Women Bear the Heaviest Burden: The Aggression Reshapes Household Structures in Gaza Strip and Doubles Women's Responsibilities

The impact of the aggression against Gaza Strip since October 7th, 2023, has extended beyond human casualties and destruction, triggering profound changes in the structure of the Palestinian households and the distribution of breadwinning responsibilities. A total of 28,560 women have lost their husbands and become widows (women whose husbands have been martyred). Meanwhile, the proportion of female-headed households increased from 12% before the aggression to approximately 18% as of October 2025, representing a relative increase of 50%. According to 2026 data from UN Women, women head approximately 86,290 households, accounting for nearly one-quarter of all households in Gaza Strip. These include widows as well as women whose husbands are absent due to disappearance, detention, or severe injury. These figures reflect the scale of the shift in household responsibilities, as women face mounting burdens in providing for their households and caring for their children amid the loss of income sources, deteriorating living conditions, and weakening support networks.

The Catastrophic Collapse of the Health Sector: Depriving Women in Gaza Strip of Their Right to Life and Specialized Care

The Israeli aggression against Gaza Strip since October 7th, 2023, has led to an almost total collapse of the health system, with approximately 94% of healthcare facilities damaged or destroyed. This has severely undermined maternal and child health services, emergency care, and specialized medical services. Approximately 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza Strip face escalating risks, with up to 180 births per day, amid the collapse of maternal and newborn healthcare services and acute shortages of medicines and medical supplies. More than 12,000 miscarriages have been reported among pregnant women due to severe food shortages and deteriorating healthcare. During the first half of 2026 alone, more than 3,950 pregnancy losses were recorded. Anemia affected 57.1% of pregnant women, while the rate of severe maternal morbidity reached 82 cases per 1,000 births. Caesarean sections accounted for 49.2% of all births during the first half of 2026. The risks are further compounded by estimates that approximately 24,600 pregnant and breastfeeding

women are experiencing acute malnutrition, while around 107,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women are at risk of having limited or no access to essential healthcare. These indicators underscore the direct threat to the health and lives of women and newborns, at a time when hospitals' operational capacity continues to deteriorate and safe, appropriate care remains out of reach for many. [7]

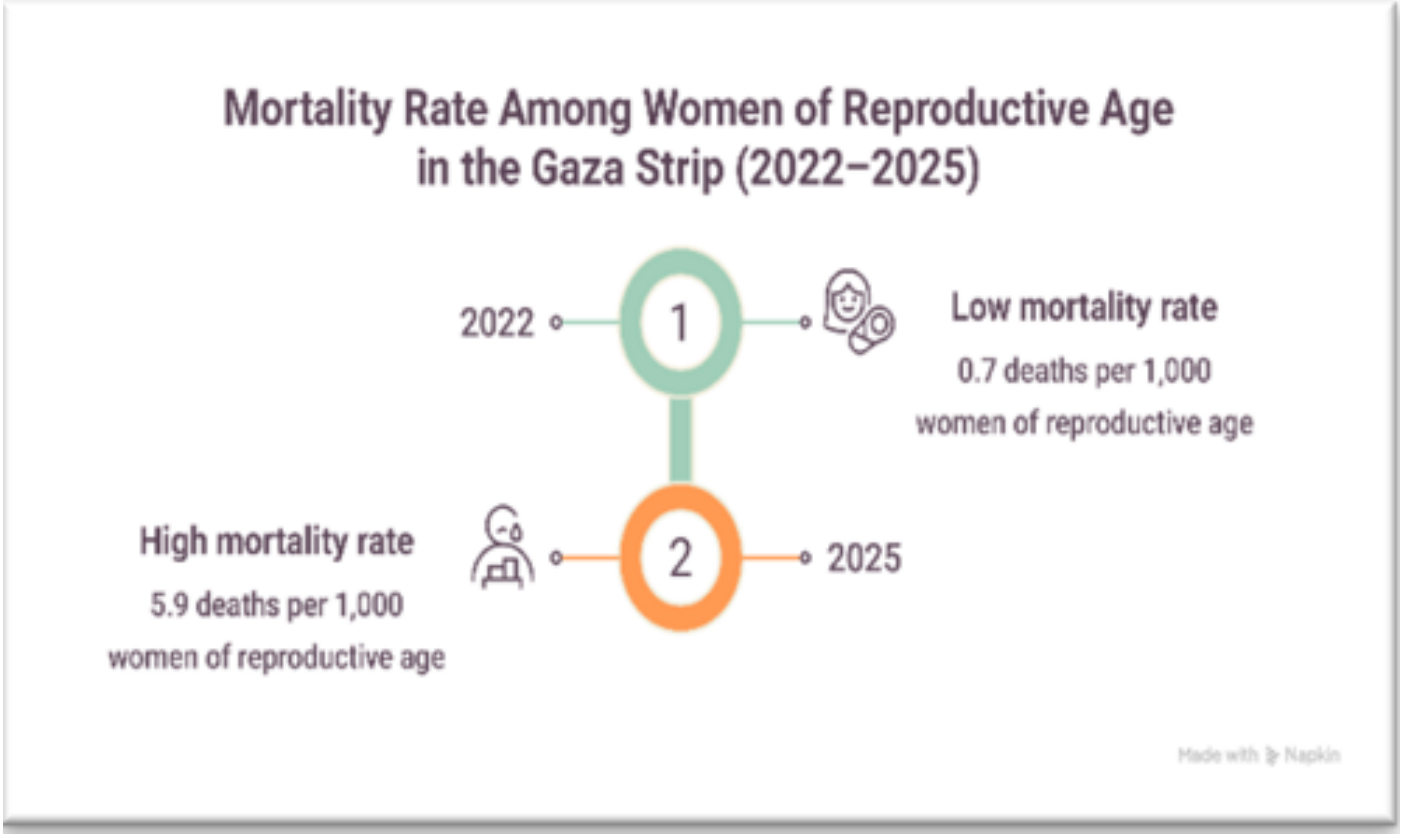
In the same context, the mortality rate among women of reproductive age rose to 5.9 deaths per 1,000 women in the same age group in 2025, compared with 0.7 deaths per 1,000 women in 2022, prior to the onset of the aggression against Gaza Strip. This sharp increase reflects the severe deterioration in health and humanitarian conditions and underscores the importance of ensuring timely access to essential and specialized healthcare services for women of reproductive age. [8]

When Homes Turn to Rubble: The Tragedy of Displacement in Gaza Strip and the West Bank

Gaza Strip has experienced an unprecedented deterioration in housing conditions and displacement. Assessments through July 2026 indicate that approximately 328,627 housing units were damaged, an increase of 2.5% compared with the end of 2025. Forced displacement has uprooted more than two million people, approximately 1.4 million of whom are living across nearly 1,000 sites and shelter locations. With more than 125,000 tents out of a total of 135,000 worn out and no longer fit for habitation, women and girls are bearing some of the harshest consequences of this collapse. Overcrowded shelters and camps deprive them of even the most basic conditions for privacy, safety, and access to essential services. Their burdens in managing household affairs and caring for household members are also compounded under these extraordinary conditions, heightening the risks of violence and severe physical and psychological harm. The loss of shelter has thus become one of the most pressing challenges affecting the dignity and very existence of the Palestinian women and households. [9]

The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, witnessed a dangerous escalation from October 2023 up to September 2026. Israeli occupation forces demolished or confiscated more than 4,750 establishments, including 1,720 inhabited homes and hundreds of agricultural and commercial establishments and water facilities. This resulted in the forced displacement of more than 8,660 Palestinians, including 2,400 women and approximately 3,700 children. Demolition policies were accompanied by severe restrictions on movement through the deployment of more than 800 obstacles and military checkpoints, including 140 iron gates, as well as repeated attacks on infrastructure and public facilities. A total of 160 incidents of infrastructure destruction were concentrated in northern West Bank refugee camps, particularly Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nur Shams. The extensive destruction of water and electricity networks and roads forced approximately 41,000 Palestinian refugees to flee, further intensifying the economic and psychological burdens on households and on women, who bear a disproportionate share of the consequences of these ongoing restrictions and demolitions.[10]

From the perspective of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the conditions of displacement and forced uprooting underscore the need for gender-responsive humanitarian assistance, recovery, and reconstruction. Women must participate meaningfully in setting priorities, managing resources, and making decisions that affect their lives, households, and communities. They must be recognized as partners in resilience, recovery, and peacebuilding, not merely as recipients of assistance and protection.



Education in Palestine: Knowledge Resilience Beneath the Rubble, and Academic Excellence Embodies the Will to Live

On the eve of the Palestinian Women's Day, the education sector stands out as one of the sectors most severely targeted, yet also one of the clearest manifestations of the Palestinian people's resilience and the determination of Palestinian girls and women. In Gaza Strip, the Israeli aggression has caused catastrophic destruction, affecting more than 179 government schools, 105 UNRWA schools, and 63 university buildings. It has also claimed the lives of more than 19,189 school students, 1,386 higher education students, and 805 teachers and administrative staff, while more than 193 scholars, academics, and researchers have been assassinated.[11] In the West Bank, ongoing violations and restrictions on safe access to educational institutions continue to threaten the right to education. Despite these conditions, the Palestinian women and girls in the West Bank continued to demonstrate remarkable academic achievement in 2025. Literacy rates among females reached 97%, rising to 99% among young females aged 15–24. Females accounted for approximately 66% of university students, while women constituted 64% of teachers in government schools. These figures underscore the leading role of the Palestinian women as guardians of identity and knowledge. They also reaffirm that investing in girls' education remains a powerful means of resisting attempts to erase the Palestinian identity and destroy its foundations, while advancing development and strengthening national resilience.

Palestinian Labour Market: Collapse in Gaza Strip, and Economic and Rights Marginalization in the West Bank

In Gaza Strip, the labour market collapsed under the weight of the aggression; although female labour force participation rose from 17% before the aggression (Q3) to 20% (September – October 2025), unemployment among them reached 92%, compared to 81% among men. Unemployment among young women holding a diploma or higher reached 86%, compared to 70% for young men, embodying the collapse of employment opportunities and the erosion of educational returns.

In the West Bank, Labour Force Survey data for the second quarter of 2026 showed that only 18% of working-age women participate in the labour force, with an unemployment rate of 31% among them. In comparison, 71% of working-age men participate in the labour force, with an unemployment rate reaching 27%. Unemployment among youth (aged 19–29) holding a diploma or higher reached 38% (51% for females compared to 23% for males). Women face challenges hindering their access to decent work; 32% of female workers earn less than the minimum wage, 23% of female wage employees lack formal employment contracts, and 48% are denied basic labour rights, undermining protection, job stability, and fairness at work.

In response to these gaps, the Ministry of Women's Affairs is working within the framework of a national vision for an inclusive Palestinian economy (2025–2030), and in line with the National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2025–2027), to expand women's access to resources, skills, finance, and markets, and to promote decent work, entrepreneurship, the cooperative economy, and the digital economy. This approach aims to transform women's economic empowerment from a series of fragmented interventions into a coherent policy pathway that strengthens women's autonomy and economic resilience. (**Source:** Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2026)

Palestinian Women and Decision-Making: Representation Without Proportionate Influence and Leadership

The results of the local council elections held in April 2026 marked a significant milestone, with women accounting for 25.6% of all elected candidates. This creates an opportunity to move beyond numerical representation towards enabling women to assume the chairpersonship of local authorities and other leadership positions in local governance. At the national level, women account for 29% of the Central Council and 11% of the Palestinian National Council. In contrast, 2025 data show a persistent “glass ceiling” limiting women's access to executive decision-making positions. Although women constitute 51% of public-sector employees, they hold only 17% of senior leadership positions (Director General and above). This gap is also evident in the justice and security sectors, where women account for 25% of judges, 27% of public prosecution personnel, and 10% of Sharia court judges, while their representation in the police force stands at only 7%. In the economic and business sectors, women's presence remains particularly limited: they hold just 2% of seats on the boards of chambers of commerce, industry, and agriculture, and 14% of board seats in companies regulated by the Palestine Capital Market Authority. These disparities underscore the need for a comprehensive review of policies to ensure equal opportunities and strengthen women's substantive influence in decision-making.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs emphasizes that addressing this gap requires more than increasing women's numerical representation; it necessitates a shift from participation to meaningful influence in decision-making. In this context, the Ministry continues to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda and implement the Third National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, strengthening women's protection and participation in decision-making positions while linking their participation to relief, recovery, reconstruction, and peacebuilding processes. **(Source:** Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2026)

The National Observatory on Violence Against Women: A Data Compass for Strengthening Protection and Guiding Policies

As part of its national efforts to strengthen the protection of the Palestinian women and combat all forms of violence and discrimination against them, the Ministry of Women's Affairs emphasizes that the development of the National Observatory on Violence Against Women represents a strategic step towards establishing an evidence-based national system. The Observatory aims to monitor patterns of community-based, domestic, digital, and economic violence, as well as violations committed by the Israeli occupation and settler violence, and their impact on women and girls. [12]

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[1]Palestinian Ministry of Health, 2026.

[2]Shireen Observatory, updated as of 12 October 2026: https://www.shireen.ps/home

[3]Palestinian Ministry of Health, 2025.

[4]Shireen Observatory (Updated as of 12/10/2026) https://www.shireen.ps/home

[5]Includes the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees affairs, the Palestinian Prisoners Club, Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association.

[6]The number of arrests includes both those who are still detained by the Israeli occupation and those who were released later on.

[7]United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2026. *Holding on to Life: Restoring Essential Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Gaza Strip*, April 16th, 2026; Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

[8]Palestinian Ministry of Health, 2026. Annual Report 2025 – Mortality in the Gaza Strip.

[9]United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT), in coordination with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Shelter Cluster.

[10]United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OCHA oPt), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

[11]Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Israeli Occupation Violations against Education in Palestine from 07/10/2023 until 07/10/2026. Ramallah – Palestine

[12]Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2026