

Strengthening Gender Equality in Palestinian Security Sector Reform

Working Paper
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The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) is an international organisation dedicated to assisting states – both developed and emerging democracies – in advancing good security sector governance, within a democratic framework and in respect of the rule of law.

DCAF provides in-country advisory support and practical assistance programmes to states that seek to strengthen governance of their security sector. DCAF works directly with national and local governments, parliaments, civil society, international organisations and defence and security forces.

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Table of contents

Overview	4
Problem statement	4
Response	5
Specific findings	5
Conclusion	8
Recommendations for further steps	8

Overview

A security sector based on gender equality is more responsive to the needs of all Palestinians, men, women, boys and girls. It reflects the principles of good governance and fulfils the requirements of international treaties and conventions.

This working paper highlights the challenges for achieving gender equality within Palestinian security institutions. The paper also reviews the efforts of executive authorities, the security institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media to further strengthen security institutions in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325).

The paper presents eight findings and concludes with clear recommendations to decision-makers and stakeholders on how to further strengthen gender equality within the Palestinian security sector through the Consultative Committee for Gender Units in the Security Sector (GCC). Both findings and recommendations are based on extensive discussions with the Palestinian Ministry of Interior, and the GCC as well as selected civil society and media organisations.

Problem statement

Strengthening gender equality within the security sector is an integral component of good security sector governance and therefore critical to efforts to enhance operational effectiveness, increase local ownership, and improve oversight and accountability.

The State of Palestine shows a special interest in strengthening gender equality within Palestinian institutions, including the security sector. A significant step was taken in 2008 when the Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 08/65/12 transforming women's units in ministries into gender units. Subsequently, gender units were established within Palestinian security institutions as well. In order to strengthen and streamline the work of these units, the Ministry of Interior established the GCC in 2013.¹ Furthermore, the State of Palestine adopted its first National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in 2016.

¹ The GCC brings together the heads of all gender units at security institutions. Its mandate is to ensure a joint approach among gender units; to build the capacities of the security institutions on strengthening gender equality; to ensure close cooperation and integration among gender units and also to enhance cooperation with CSOs.

Although these institutional developments are an important step in the right direction there are a number of remaining challenges associated with creating an enabling environment for achieving gender equality within the Palestinian security sector:

1. **Palestinian security institutions do not give sufficient importance to gender specific needs:** Both internally and when delivering services, Palestinian security institutions and their decision-makers do not prioritise gender specific needs and the importance of gender equality.
2. **Palestinian CSOs and the media cannot play an effective oversight role in strengthening gender equality in security institutions:** CSOs and the media often lack the capacity to exercise an effective oversight role in a neutral and professional way. In addition, security institutions are hesitant to share information on internal affairs and claim gender is one of them. As a result, they do not share information related to their efforts and/or challenges associated with gender equality with CSOs and the media, further impeding the possibility for oversight.

Response

Between January 2016 and July 2017, DCAF supported the GCC, Palestinian CSOs and the media in their collaborative effort to work towards gender equality in the security sector. This effort occurred in close cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA). While the capacities of the GCC, CSOs and the media were enhanced as a result of this process, DCAF's work revealed several areas of additional need that are presented as eight specific findings in this working paper.

Specific findings

Finding #1: *The roles and responsibilities of the GCC are not sufficiently regulated.*

The Minister of Interior established the GCC based on the Decision No. (40) of 2013 'Concerning the Formation of a Consultative Committee for Gender Units in the Security Sector'. The decision itself is very short and only establishes a broad framework for the GCC to operate. Article (2) describes the GCC's responsibilities as coordination, capacity building, and strengthening gender equality within security institutions. However, it states in Article (3) that the GCC shall develop a bylaw regulating its work.

The GCC Bylaw was issued in May 2013. In Article (2) it refers to the tasks mentioned in Article (2) of the decision, but does not define the GCC's roles and responsibilities any further.

Moreover, the tasks of the GCC mentioned in the decision and the bylaw are not enshrined in the internal policies and procedures of the security institutions themselves. Therefore, the powers of the GCC, as defined in the existing regulations, can be interpreted as limited.

Finding #2: *The internal functioning of the GCC does not facilitate effectiveness and efficiency.*

The GCC consists of all heads of gender units within security institutions. Only the GCC Bylaw regulates the internal functioning of the

committee. In Articles (1), (4), (5), and (6) the bylaw defines three positions for the GCC and their main tasks: president, vice-president and secretary. However, the bylaw remains vague on the mechanism to fill these positions. It states that the president and the vice-president are appointed by GCC members based on consensus. The bylaw does not mention how the position of the secretary should be filled.

Different power centres exist within the committee, based on higher military ranks, support by security institutions, and seniority. This is also reflected in the competition among GCC members to serve as president or vice-president. Thus, reaching consensus among all members often proves to be difficult. To simplify the process, the GCC established a rotation system for both positions. However, the terms are short (between four and six months) and criteria for being appointed are neither clear nor strategic.

Finding #3: *The GCC neither fully exploits its codified status nor takes on its designated responsibilities.*

The GCC members have demonstrated a commitment to participation and collaborative engagement with local and international organisations. Nonetheless, there seems to be a lack of political will combined with some limitations in knowledge capacity that have resulted in little pro-active engagement to establish the GCC as the leading body on gender equality for the security institutions. This will require clear leadership – both within the GCC and for the purpose of outreach and external engagement. The GCC does not view its current mandate as an opportunity rather than as a ceiling which impedes action when not specified. The GCC has been tasked with the responsibility of coordinating and strengthening gender equality within the security institutions, including capacity building. While Decision No. (40) of 2013 does not specify how this should be done, the GCC has both the responsibility and the expertise to identify the ways and means appropriate for the security sector.

Finding #4: *The GCC supporting committee is inactive and not engaged by the GCC.*

Article (2) of the GCC Bylaw refers to a supporting committee which includes:

1. a representative of the President's Office;
2. a representative of the Prime Minister's Office; and
3. a representative of the MoWA.

The bylaw does not provide any further information on needed qualifications for the representatives and their selection. It does not define the role of the supporting committee, which input it shall provide to the GCC and if it shall attend GCC meetings. Thus, the advantage of being supported by three key actors in achieving gender equality in the Palestinian security sector is not being translated into action.

In addition, the GCC has made no specific effort to pro-actively engage the supporting committee to strengthen its own efforts and provide political leverage and strategic guidance. This is a missed opportunity for the GCC as the committee is in the best position to identify and define the political, technical and strategic support needed and that the supporting committee can provide.

Finding #5: *The advancement of gender units within security institutions is inconsistent.*

Not all security institutions support and prioritise the work of gender units. This can and does result in a lack of human, financial and infrastructure resources necessary to undertake the work of gender equality. In addition, when security institutions fail to provide adequate political and strategic support to gender units this can result in impeding or undermining efforts to promote gender equality. The advancement of gender units within security institutions is inconsistent:

1. Not all 14 security institutions represented in the GCC have established gender units. Some treat gender as a file and assign the responsibility to one or two employees. While the majority have well established gender units, not all operate with the same level of institutional support or knowledge capacity.
2. Reporting lines between units differ. Nearly all gender units represented in the GCC report directly to the head of the institution. Few are a part of a public affairs or media department,

which decreases their leverage to work on gender equality as a cross-cutting topic for their respective institution.

3. Most staff of gender units or files are women, while women represent only 4% of all Palestinian security officers. This reflects a misunderstanding within security institutions regarding the goal of gender equality and the concept of gender, as they perceive gender units as only representing the concerns of women officers.
4. Gender units represented in the GCC suffer from human and financial resource shortages including a lack of staff to meaningfully undertake the work of gender equality, and the necessary office premises and equipment to support those efforts. Only a few security institutions treat gender equality as a priority and allocate resources accordingly.
5. Some gender units themselves lack the will and/or the capacity to promote gender equality in a manner that contributes to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the security institutions.
6. Gender units or files are generally located in Ramallah/Al-Bireh. Only a few gender units have employees in other West Bank governorates, which impedes both the scope and the contextualisation of the work.

Finding #6: *Sharing information and experiences among and between gender units within security institutions is limited.*

Although the Minister of Interior's Decision No. (40) of 2013 stipulates in Article (2) that the GCC is formed to "ensure having a joint approach for all gender units in the security sector" and to "enhance close cooperation and integration" among these units, information is not shared systematically within the GCC for several reasons:

1. Security institutions consider gender units an internal affair and thus have a tendency to keep all information confidential when it is not always necessary.
2. The GCC does not pro-actively identify relevant information to share with its members or gender units.

Thus, the GCC and gender units are not able to identify good practices, common challenges, lessons learned and emerging considerations. This

in turn impedes the possibility for the GCC and gender units to develop coherent and consistent solutions for similar problems.

Finding #7: *CSOs and the media do not contribute enough to transparency and accountability on gender equality within the security sector.*

In general, information-sharing by security institutions with CSOs and the media is very limited. Security institutions consider gender an internal and therefore sensitive topic. As a result, CSOs and the media cannot access information and are unable to provide transparency and accountability on institutional efforts to promote gender equality, or the lack thereof.

In addition, gender equality in the security sector does not seem to be an important topic for CSOs and the media. They rarely request information from security institutions and report on findings even less frequently. Only a few CSOs and media outlets are aware of the existence and mandate of gender units within security institutions or the existence and mandate of the GCC. This may be linked to a lack of knowledge about security sector reform efforts in general, and integrating gender equality within the security sector in particular.

Moreover, if CSOs and the media are unaware of the current status of gender equality within the security sector and progress in that regard, they will not be able to accurately contribute to important reports like the CEDAW shadow report.

Finding #8: *The oversight role of CSOs and the media in strengthening gender equality within the Palestinian security sector is not effective.*

CSOs and the media cannot adequately exercise their oversight role. Presently there is no established coordination between the GCC and the media/CSOs for the following reasons:

1. **Lack of trust:** There is a lack of trust between the GCC and CSOs and the media which results in a limited relationship instead of cooperation between them.
2. **Lack of knowledge:** CSOs and the media lack knowledge about security institutions in general and gender equality specifically. They are often not aware of their oversight role of the security sector and thus do not take steps to exercise it. Furthermore, security

Box 1: Overview of the possible role of CSOs in strengthening gender equality within the Palestinian security sector

CSOs can play different roles in supporting security institutions to strengthen gender equality within the security sector by:

1. Exercising an **active oversight role** of the security sector by assessing, monitoring and evaluating efforts to promote gender equality within security institutions and reporting on resulting achievements, remaining gaps and new challenges.
2. Having clear and comprehensive **research and data** about the activities and conduct of the security sector, including institutional gender equality indicators like gender disaggregated data on recruitment, retention, promotion and assignment, and discrimination and harassment.
3. **Analysing the budget** for security institutions from a gender perspective, including identification of where resources go and whether that is in line with both institutional and operational needs and priorities.
4. Conducting **advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns** to increase public awareness and knowledge on gender equality and its relationship to security sector institutions, this includes making the link between gender equality as an integral component of efficient and effective security services.
5. Working with **the media** to perform their civilian oversight role, including making the link between gender equality and the improved effectiveness and efficiency of security institutions.
6. Providing **gender equality training** for security sector officials in order to contribute to capacity building.
7. Building **civil society networks** to exercise public pressure to obtain official commitments and access information.
8. Improving their **cooperation with gender units** in order to provide support and increase accountability.

institutions do not know which role CSOs and the media can and must play in terms of oversight. Security institutions may see CSOs and the media as a threat rather than a means for communication and support.

3. **Weak role models:** Many CSOs and media outlets do not follow policies on gender equality themselves. Their internal structures do not value or promote women and men equally within their institutions or provide support for balancing professional and family responsibilities. When designing support programmes for Palestinians, CSOs do not always analyse the gendered needs of women, men, girls and boys separately. As a result they are not positioned to function as a role model to other institutions, including the security sector. Moreover, it can be difficult for them to hold security institutions accountable for gender equality when their own institutions lack the political will and the knowledge capacity to promote gender equality themselves.

Conclusion

The State of Palestine took important steps towards integrating gender equality in its security sector, such as: 1) establishing gender units within security institutions, 2) setting up the GCC, 3) acceding to the CEDAW convention without reservations, and 4) adopting the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. CSOs and the media are also interested in strengthening gender equality within the security sector by supporting the GCC and playing a more effective oversight role. All this is a good basis to fully realise gender equality in Palestinian security institutions.

However, this will only be successful if the GCC and gender units within security institutions are empowered and if CSOs and the media simultaneously intensify their cooperation with the GCC and exercise effective oversight.

To facilitate needed changes, DCAF proposes the following recommendations to Palestinian decision-makers and stakeholders.

Recommendations for further steps

Based on the specific findings of this working paper, international standards and best practices, DCAF recommends:

To high-level decision-makers of Palestinian executive authorities and the Palestinian Legislative Council:

- Integrate gender equality within the legal framework of Palestinian security institutions (the Law of Service in the Palestinian Security Forces No. (8) of 2005) to guarantee equal rights and opportunities for men and women.
- Clarify and activate the roles of the President's Office, the Council of Ministers and the MoWA, as members of the GCC supporting committee to ensure the highest level of political and strategic support for gender equality.

To decision-makers of the Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs:

- Support the GCC and gender units within security institutions by helping them to:
 - Monitor and assess the status of gender equality within the Palestinian security sector including the efficiency and effectiveness of the GCC, gender units and relevant national plans and policies (National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325),
 - Assess the security and justice needs of the Palestinian population, women, men, girls and boys, to improve the operational efficiency and effectiveness of security services, and
 - Advocate for the MoI to provide the GCC and gender units with needed resources and support their efforts to acquire external funds.
- Support the GCC to actively cooperate with CSOs and the media, as outlined in Article (2) of the Decision No. (40) of 2013 to strengthen civilian oversight of security institutions in general and on the topic of gender equality in particular.

To decision-makers of the Palestinian Ministry of Interior:

- Request the GCC to review and amend its current bylaw in a manner that enables them to promote gender equality within Palestinian security institutions, as mandated by Decision No. (40) from 2013;
- Empower GCC members within their own security institutions and support the committee's contributions to the development of policies, programmes and plans to strengthen gender equality within all security institutions; and
- Establish working relationships with CSOs and the media to enable them to exercise an effective civilian oversight role of the security sector, with a special focus on the status of gender equality.

To the Palestinian security institutions:

- Ensure that all recruitment, selection, retention and promotion processes follow policies that grant equal opportunities to qualified men and women in order to improve service delivery to men, women, boys and girls and increase institutional efficiency and effectiveness;
- Assess the needs of men and women within security institutions to identify the challenges, barriers and opportunities present with respect to the full and equal integration of women within the security sector;
- Assess the needs of the population, women, men, girls and boys, in order to determine the operational priorities of the security sector; and
- Continue the initiation of and support to gender units to strengthen gender equality by:
 - Establishing gender units within remaining security institutions;
 - Strengthening existing units by including them in the institution's organisational structures and clarify reporting lines;
 - Changing the organisational set-up of those gender units that are part of other departments, such as PR and media, to separate units reporting directly to the head of the institution; and
 - Providing the necessary human, financial and infrastructure resources for gender units to undertake meaningful work.

To GCC members:

- Strengthen the internal functioning of the committee to coordinate and strengthen efforts to promote gender equality within the security sector. This should include:
 - Reviewing and amending the GCC Bylaw (selection and term length of all positions, internal work mechanisms);
 - Developing annual action plans in coordination with the GCC supporting committee; and
 - Sharing information on the progress and challenges of gender units within security institutions regularly.
- Raising the knowledge capacities of its members on gender equality as an integral component of efficient and effective security forces to enable the GCC to fully undertake its responsibility to promote gender equality.
- Building strong relationships with CSOs and the media, including sharing information, according to Article (2) of Decision No. (40) of 2013, to support their oversight role.

To Palestinian CSOs and the media:

- Revise their institutional and policy framework in accordance with gender equality best practices. This will enable CSOs and the media to serve as a positive role model for gender equality;
- Develop their capacities and increase their knowledge of gender and security sector reform, including relevant international standards on the oversight role of CSOs and the media with security sector institutions, with a special focus on strengthening gender equality;
- Request information on the status, progress and challenges within security institutions with regard to gender equality and report on those findings in relevant reports like the CEDAW shadow report; and
- Establish cooperation with the GCC and regularly request information on their status, progress and challenges in relation to their efforts to coordinate and promote gender equality within the security sector and report on those findings in relevant reports like the CEDAW shadow report.

Box 2: Draft principles of cooperation developed by the GCC, CSOs and the media (May 2017)

DCAF facilitated joint consultations between the GCC, CSOs and the media in various West Bank governorates on how to strengthen gender equality in Palestinian security sector reform. Based on these activities the gap between them decreased. The GCC, CSOs and the media agreed that cooperation between them is a necessity to strengthen gender equality in the Palestinian security sector. The GCC, CSOs and the media discussed principles of cooperation between them. This draft can be used as a basis for future cooperation agreements between them.

Draft principles of cooperation developed by the GCC, CSOs and the media (May 2017)

The principles of cooperation are designed to fulfil the following:

- Enhance the role of women in the security sector
- Promote community partnerships, based on the principle of partners in decisions and partners in responsibility
- Exchange experience
- Enhance trust between the security sector and civil society
- Support for each other, e.g. trainings, logistics, etc.

The cooperation shall be founded upon the following principles:

- Democracy and good governance
- Security as a responsibility of all, built on trust and partnerships
- Transparency and integrity
- Clarity of objectives for cooperation
- Objectivity
- Respect of privacy
- Credibility
- Commitment

The Gender Consultative Committee shall:

- Enhance cooperation and strengthen partnerships between the security sector and civil society
- Provide a link between civil society and the security institutions
- Implement training programmes on enhancing gender equality
- Prepare for future projects
- Improve gender-sensitive service delivery
- Raise awareness on the important role of women in the security sector

Civil society organisations and the media shall:

- Provide support to the GCC
- Provide studies, expertise, and data
- Contribute to capacity-building for security sector officials through joint trainings
- Provide a link between citizens and official institutions through media campaigns
- Provide professional media coverage that aims at changing prevailing views

DCAF remains available to support Palestinian efforts to integrate gender equality in the security sector in line with international standards.

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