

## COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Palestine
Question(s)	<p>1. Information on honour killings of men in Gaza, especially in relation to perceived apostasy</p> <p>1.1. Information on the concept of honour and on honour-related killings in Gaza</p> <p>1.2. Documented cases of honour killings of men perceived as apostates in Gaza</p>
Date of completion	10 January 2020
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*The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.*

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*The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 10 January 2020. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.*

## COI QUERY RESPONSE

### 1. Information on honour killings of men in Gaza, especially in relation to perceived apostasy

#### 1.1. Information on the concept of honour and on honour-related killings in Gaza

The Honour Based Violence Awareness Network (HBVA), an international digital resource centre researching and documenting honour based violence<sup>1</sup>, while not specifically referring to Gaza or Palestine, wrote about the issue the following:

‘Women (and men) are expected to conform to the wishes of their elders who are presumed to be acting in for the greater good of the family as a whole; those who insist upon their autonomy are considered selfish and disruptive to the family, and its honour. Where a perceived slight to the family ‘honour’ has occurred, responses vary, according to the family’s preferences and the public nature of the ‘dishonouring’ behaviour.’<sup>2</sup>

A report by the Human Rights Council (HRC) noted that ‘[f]amily honour plays a fundamental role in Palestinian society.’<sup>3</sup>

An overview of Palestine on the LIPortal, an internet portal providing expert information on some 80 countries in German language, states that [informal translation]:

‘The predominant social unit in Palestine is the extended family (Hamula in Arabic). Its members can belong to very different social classes and yet there is a feeling of responsibility and togetherness among each other, which is evident in business relationships or in conflicts with other families. On the other hand, the hamula exercises social control and demands that the individual submits himself to the community. The individual must not do anything that could damage the reputation of the extended family. Whether in business or private life, every person represents the entire extended family and every clan is held responsible for the actions of an individual. This is especially true for women. The family’s honour, Arabic Sharaf, depends on their behaviour in public.’<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Glenn E. Robinson, an assistant professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California<sup>5</sup>, explains the concept of family honour in Palestine as follows:

‘The formal cement that ties together clan members is a mithaq al-sharaf, or code of honour, which is binding on all male members. The mithaq is often a formal written agreement, pages long, that ties together all the disparate families that constitute the hamula. They pledge not only their loyalty to each other but agree that an attack, (physical or honour based) on one member constitutes an attack on all members of the hamula. Given that Palestinian society

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<sup>1</sup> See: HBVA, About, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> HBVA, Forms of honour based violence and oppression, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>3</sup> HRC, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, on her mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territory/State of Palestine, 8 June 2017, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>4</sup> Schöning, P., Palästinensische Gebiete, In: LIPortal, December 2019, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> For more information on Dr Glenn E. Robinson see: [url](#)

shares the honour-shame social system common to Mediterranean countries, individual members cannot easily violate this code without dishonouring themselves and their families. It is a powerful social glue, especially in the absence of a functioning state that can provide public security. Absent such a state, the code of vendetta and revenge often becomes dominant.’<sup>6</sup>

A 2007 report by the International Crisis Group further explained that:

‘The mithaq, which can be a document many pages long, is signed by the leaders of individual clan families and serves as a constitution of sorts. “All men of the clan stand as one man whether in ill or in joy”, reads one such document. “The clan stands in solidarity with any member in case attacked morally or physically”. Backing is withheld only in cases of “lewd or immoral acts contrary to the principles of the Sharia [Islamic law]”.’<sup>7</sup>

Sources indicate that conflicts between clans over honour can be triggered even by minor events.<sup>8</sup>

Landinfo, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, explained that ‘[t]he rationale behind escalatory conflicts of this kind is that an insult aimed at one member of the hamula or clan must be avenged (thar) by inflicting as great or greater insult on the other party. This can trigger a spiral of violence due the unwillingness of either party to be the first to back down. The maintenance or restoration of the hamula’s honour is a central factor in conflicts.’<sup>9</sup>

Human Rights Watch notes that cases of ‘honour killings’ are often resolved by traditional conflict resolution system. It should be noted, however, that the source defined such cases as ‘cases where a woman risks being killed as a result of being deemed to have tarnished her family’s reputation through her behaviour’ and it does not specifically mention possible male victims.<sup>10</sup> In general, women are more likely to be seen as trespassing the behavioural standards expected by their family members and thus violating their honour.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2. Documented cases of honour killings of men perceived as apostates in Gaza

No information on honour killings of men perceived as apostates in Gaza could be found amongst consulted and used sources. Although not necessarily related to apostasy, the information provided below regarding documented cases of honour killings in Gaza could be of relevance.

<sup>6</sup> Robinson, G.E., Palestinian Tribes, Clans and Notable Families, MePeace.org, 31 May 2009, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> International Crisis Group, Inside Gaza: The Challenge of Clans and Families, 20 December 2007, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>8</sup> Landinfo, Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre: Clan conflicts in the Palestinian Territory, 28 July 2008, [url](#), p. 7; International Crisis Group, Inside Gaza: The Challenge of Clans and Families, 20 December 2007, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>9</sup> Landinfo, Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre: Clan conflicts in the Palestinian Territory, 28 July 2008, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>10</sup> Landinfo, Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre: Clan conflicts in the Palestinian Territory, 28 July 2008, [url](#), p. 17

<sup>11</sup> Schöning, P., Palästinensische Gebiete [Palestinian Territories], In: LIPortal (Länderinformationsportal), December 2019, [url](#)

Some sources suggest that there were no recorded cases of honour killings in Gaza in 2018, even though they note that the information about the situation is limited.<sup>12</sup> The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), a Gaza-based NGO 'dedicated to protecting human rights, promoting the rule of law and upholding democratic principles in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)'<sup>13</sup> recorded four honour killings in Palestine in 2018.<sup>14</sup> In November 2017, Al Mezan Center For Human Rights, a Gaza-based NGO, reported on 23 documented cases of honour killings in Gaza since 2008, indicating that the victims were women.<sup>15</sup>

Sources suggest that the victims of recorded honour crimes in Palestine were almost exclusively women.<sup>16</sup> In a 2010 interview, Naima al-Rawagh, a local activist overseeing the Women's Empowerment Programme in Gaza, noted that she is not aware of any case of a man being killed because of honour in Palestine.<sup>17</sup>

The four honour killings recorded in Palestine in 2018 by the PCHR caused death of two men and four women. The male victims were in both cases murdered together with female victims, namely in the village of Ya'oud and in the town of Jenin in the West Bank (no cases were recorded by the source in Gaza).<sup>18</sup> The same source has not recorded any male victims of honour violence in Palestine in 2017 and 2016.<sup>19</sup>

The PCHR additionally recorded 13 cases of 'use of weapons in personal and family disputes' in 2018, ten of those in Gaza, with both, male and female victims.<sup>20</sup> In 2017, 12 persons were killed under this category, seven of them in Gaza, including at least three male victims.<sup>21</sup> In 2016, it was 26 persons, 14 in Gaza, including at least two male victims.<sup>22</sup>

In November 2018, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) published a response about the treatment of sexual minorities in Palestine that indicates that also homosexuals, including men, can be the victims of honour crimes. Nevertheless, the source noted that majority of honour crimes are committed against women and that '[t]ransgressing social norms' can lead to 'bullying, verbal and even physical harassment'. In relation to the crimes committed against the sexual minorities, the

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<sup>12</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019 - Gaza Strip, 4 February 2019, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 - Israel, Golan Heights, West Bank, and Gaza - West Bank and Gaza, 13 March 2019, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> See: PCHR, About PCHR, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> PCHR, Annual report 2018, 1 July 2019, [url](#), pp. 84, 87

<sup>15</sup> Al Mezan Center For Human Rights, It Is Time to End Violence Against Women!, 26 November 2017, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> CEDAW, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention pursuant to the simplified reporting procedure, State of Palestine, 24 May 2017, [url](#), pp. 10-11, 13, 19; HRC, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, on her mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territory/State of Palestine, 8 June 2017, [url](#), pp. 6-7; HRW, The Deadly Toll for Palestinian Women, 19 September 2019, [url](#); Independent (The), Robert Fisk: The truth about 'honour' killings, 10 September 2010, [url](#); Khalil, A., Formal and Informal Justice in Palestine: Dealing with the Legacy of Tribal Law, In: La tribu à l'heure de la globalisation, 2010, [url](#), p. 28; OECD, SIGI - Social Institutions & Gender Index 2019 - West Bank and Gaza Strip, December 2018, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> Independent (The), Robert Fisk: The truth about 'honour' killings, 10 September 2010, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> PCHR, Annual report 2018, 1 July 2019, [url](#), p. 84

<sup>19</sup> PCHR, Annual report 2017, 28 June 2018, [url](#); PCHR, Annual report 2016, 20 June 2017, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> PCHR, Annual report 2018, 1 July 2019, [url](#), p. 87

<sup>21</sup> PCHR, Annual report 2017, 28 June 2018, [url](#), p. 92-93

<sup>22</sup> PCHR, Annual report 2016, 20 June 2017, [url](#), p. 73



source noted that there is no organisation that would systematically document honour killings in Palestine.<sup>23</sup> One source noted that honour crimes in Palestine can also be based on disputes over money and inheritance. Nevertheless, the source indicated that women would likely be the victims.<sup>24</sup>

For general information about the situation of atheists and apostates in Gaza, it is possible to consult an EASO COI query response<sup>25</sup> at the following link: [url](#)

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<sup>23</sup> IRB, Palestine: Treatment of sexual minorities by society and authorities, including legislation, state protection, and support services (2016-October 2018), 23 November 2018, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> Independent (The), Robert Fisk: The truth about 'honour' killings, 10 September 2010, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> EASO, EASO COI Query response, Palestine/Gaza, Atheists and Apostates, 10 January 2020, [url](#)



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