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# A Double Occupation: The Struggle Within The Struggle

A field study about Palestinian women's struggle for gender  
equality during life under occupation

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# Abstract

This study explores two forms of oppressions facing Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: the Israeli Occupation and the Patriarchal Structure in their society. The purpose of the study is to examine how these oppressions intersect and impact Palestinian women's daily life and their struggle for gender equality. Two questions, in accordance with the study's purpose were of particular interest: how they experience the violence they are exposed to from the occupation and the patriarchy, and what they consider to be the constraining and enabling conditions in the struggle for gender equality. A qualitative method, in form of eight semi-structured interviews were conducted in Israel-Palestine in 2016. The findings were divided into four themes, and subsequently analyzed through Galtung's three forms of inter-related violence, Yuval-Davis' theories on gender and nation and scrutinized by an intersectional approach. The study finds that the women experience the violence in the occupation in similar ways but disagree on the patriarchal violence, the intersection of the two and how to face them. The conditions to struggle for gender equality during occupation are mostly viewed as constraining but also concludes that more research needs to be done in this complex intersection of oppressions and struggles.

**Keywords:** Palestinian Women in the OPTs, Gender Equality, Occupation, Patriarchy, Intersectionality

**Words:** 9770

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دوَأ أَن أَشكر كل من ساهم في كتابة هذه الأطروحة. الشكر الأكبر للمستجيبين الثمانية في النبي صالح، رام الله، القدس، بيت لحم والخليل لمشاركتكم وقتكم، أفكاركم، تجاربكم، وقصصكم معي. لا وجود لهذه الأطروحة بدونكم. أود أيضاً أن أشكر الأشخاص الذين دلوني في الإتجاه الصحيح، نيذلاً اودعاس يف إيجاد المستجيبين والذين عرفوني على الضفة الغربية، تل أبيب والقدس، كما أريد أن أشكر الأصدقاء الذين تعرفت عليهم خلال رحلتي والكرم الفائض الذي أظهره بفتح أبواب منازلهم يل، يتوعد ءاشعلل وقضاء الساعات معي لشرب القهوة معي خلال مختلف الأحاديث. شكراً جزيلاً!

# Table of Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Context .....	2
1.2	Research question.....	3
1.3	Relevance & Previous Research .....	4
<b>2</b>	<b>Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	Galtung’s three forms of Violence .....	6
2.1.1	Galtung’s Peace .....	8
2.2	Standpoint Feminism.....	8
2.3	Yuval-Davis .....	9
<b>3</b>	<b>Research Design.....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1	Methodology .....	10
3.2	Material .....	11
3.2.1	The interviews .....	12
3.2.2	The respondents.....	13
3.3	Ethical considerations .....	14
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings &amp; Analysis .....</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1	Gender & Violence in the Occupation .....	17
4.2	Gender & Violence within .....	19
4.2.1	Analysis – Intersection .....	21
4.2	Gender & Violence within .....	19
4.3	Gender Equality .....	
4.3.1	View on Gender equality .....	23
4.3.2	Conditions for Gender Equality .....	24
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>27</b>

# 1 Introduction

*“I feel like I have two occupations; the Israeli occupation and the cultural occupation which connects the family and the religion and everything. So yeah, imagine your life with two occupations. How awful is that.”*

-Respondent, Hebron, 2016

*“...I would say in Palestine actually, women are exposed to two kind of occupations; the structural patriarchal occupation and the...occupation that is the Israeli occupation so...that's why women struggle twice.”*

-Respondent, East Jerusalem, 2016

The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, often referred to as 'the world's most intractable conflict', has been spanning over seven decades. It impacts Palestinian men and women in different ways and in different degrees as all conflicts have a gendered aspect, and gendered faceted aspects have always been prominent in the Israeli occupation (Sharoni,1999:492, Shalhoub-Keverokian,2003:582). Resolution 1325, adopted by the United Nations (UN) two decades ago, expresses a “concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict”. In the West Bank, for instance, Palestinian girls miss more days of school in a year than their male counterparts. Women and girls are targeted by the military, Israel Defense Forces (IDF), based on their gender (Anderson,2015). Women are also constrained to the private sphere to a larger extent than men. This as a direct consequence of the IDFs curfews (frequently arbitrary) enforced in certain Palestinian cities, along with curfews imposed by the family, concerned about their female family members (ibid.). Reports on how women and girls are being disproportionately impacted by the conflict are increasing (Report,2018).

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the people’s resistance struggle are usually what dominate the debate about oppression and resistance in the Israeli-Palestinian context. This is also where the international focus typically lies, overshadowing the struggles for equality, women's rights as well as their crucial role in the resistance (Anderson,2015). In addition to the oppression experienced by Palestinians living in East Jerusalem and the West

Bank, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, (henceforth referred to as the OPTs) there are also strong patriarchal structures within the Palestinian society. Al Jazeera (2020) reported a major increase in recent years' domestic violence and honor related crimes. Patriarchal structures also take the shape of structural violence, consisting of the disavowal to make decisions about one's own body and future, and laws discriminating women (Anderson:2015).

## 1.1 Context

A brief background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Palestinians in the OPTs will be given and put into a context in order to situate the interviews in this study. When field work for this study took place in May 2016, I was visiting Ramallah the day Palestinians remember and grieve *Al-Nakba* (Arabic for *The Catastrophe*). Standing on the street that day, I saw hundreds of Palestinians walking with meter-tall keys made of paper, demonstrating their right to return to their homes they lost nearly 70 years ago. May 2020 marked the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of this crucial struggle; the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, known to Israeli's as the War of Independence and the year they declared statehood, and to Palestinians known as *Al-Nakba*, leading to the mass displacement of nearly 800,000 Palestinians; Today an estimated six million Palestinian refugees live in the diaspora globally (UN 2018, NYT 2008). [See E. Karsh *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Palestine War 1948*]. Denoted by the UN, Israel is, in breach of international law, occupying Palestinian territory and has been since nearly twenty years after the 1948 War. In 1967 Israel illegally annexed East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and the Israeli occupation has since been advancing into continuous annexation of Palestinian lands (UN,2018, B'Tselem,2015). A minority of Palestinians in the annexed areas were given the status of permanent residents in Israel, hold Israeli ID cards (note, not the same as Israeli citizens) and live under different conditions and have different struggles than Palestinians in the OPTs (B'Tselem,2015,2016). The vast majority of Palestinians in the OPTs however, are stateless.

Consequences of the Israeli occupation include restriction of mobility for Palestinians, IDF's control over checkpoints and the nearly two-decade old separation wall in the West Bank, Israeli military presence in the OPTs and unlawful settlements by Israelis on occupied territory (referred to as settlers). After the Oslo Accords were signed in the early 90s between the state of Israel and PLO, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) took place (B'Tselem,2015,2016). The West Bank has since been separated into Area A, Area B and Area C; the first one under the PA's control, the second with Israeli control over its security and

PA's control over civilian matters, and Area C, under absolute Israeli control (UN,2017). Feminist scholars argue women are oppressed because of the existing power structures in society, called the patriarchy; an institutionalized system where the male is the dominant authority, the bread winner, the fighter and the source of knowledge. The female, on the other hand is regarded inferior, and subordinated to the male, bound to the private sphere rather than the public, the male being superior of both. The cornerstones endorsing this system is the gender norms - the patriarchal values, beliefs and morals, and gender equality in this system is unachievable. Women in all patriarchal societies therefore suffer under the system of patriarchal norms, the violence from tradition and culture as well as antiquated legal structures (Sultana,20102ff). This understanding does not however suggest I believe my respondents (or all women globally) to have the same experiences of the patriarchy. It does however suggest the occupation of the OPTs, and the society being permeated by patriarchal systems, hence part of the reality for Palestinian women.

## 1.2 Research question

Resistance against oppressing systems and actors have always been part of human history, nonetheless only in recent decades have intersectionality, combining perspectives of oppressions been part of analyzing it. The two opening quotes embody the theme for this study: Palestinian women facing and relating to several patriarchal power-structures and ideologies. Thus, this study takes its starting point in the narratives of Palestinian women, their views and experiences on the struggle for a more equal society on one hand and the struggle against Israeli occupation on the other. If and how do you vis-à-vis face and combat them? The purpose of this study is to examine that - the intersection of patriarchal systems and the Israeli occupation, and how struggles against several forms of oppressions can be conducted. By having an intersectional and therefore broader perspective on oppression and violence in this study I seek to contribute to the discourse on women's lives in occupied societies and their struggles for and against structures and systems. The two research questions (RQ) guiding this study are:



*How do Palestinian women in the OPTs experience occupation and patriarchy in terms of different forms of violence?*

*What do Palestinian women in the OPTs consider to be the enabling and constraining conditions for pursuing gender equality under double occupation?*

### 1.3 Relevance & Previous Research

This research is meaningful in a number of ways; it brings visibility to the lives people live and conditions they endure under occupation as this study aims to capture the voices and narratives of Palestinian women. It can therefore contribute to the literature in International Relations (IR) called *Everyday Experiences* [See e.g., Mannergren Selimovic & Strömbom, 2015]. Mannergren Selimovic (2018:3f) discusses the growing research in this field and recent years' upswing of bottom-up viewpoints and "local experiences" of peace and security dynamics". This study is about a group of people's experiences and of non-scientific relevance. I argue that research and reports on these subjects mostly are theoretical, reaching the same academic audience, excluding groups' own narratives and stories, hence this study is of scientific relevance on the premise that a significant part in the field of research and literature isn't abundantly discussed: women's 'political and social life under occupation and intersectional perspectives in an occupied society. B. Morris has written extensively about the developments in the region and the conflict's early days [See 1948: *A history of the first Arab-Israeli War*, 2008]. Scholar and journalist R. Sayigh known for collecting Palestinian life stories offers a sweeping recapitulation of history in her book *Palestinians: from peasants to revolutionaries: a people's history* (1979). Sayigh has also researched Palestinian women's views on rights and gender roles under occupation and difficulties when seeking to be a feminist striving for equality and change vis-à-vis being part of the collective national struggle. Sayigh's connects her research to local perspective and everyday IR.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a very prominent conflict in our lifetime has been widely researched and scrutinized throughout the years. Given the limitations of space and scope in this chapter I cannot even attempt to give a systematic review of previous research and literature in this context. This study is about intersectionality, structures, and oppressions, hence interdisciplinary, able to add to discourses on gender equality, struggles against oppressions and women's lives under occupation, combined and intersected. Angela Davis writes about everyday

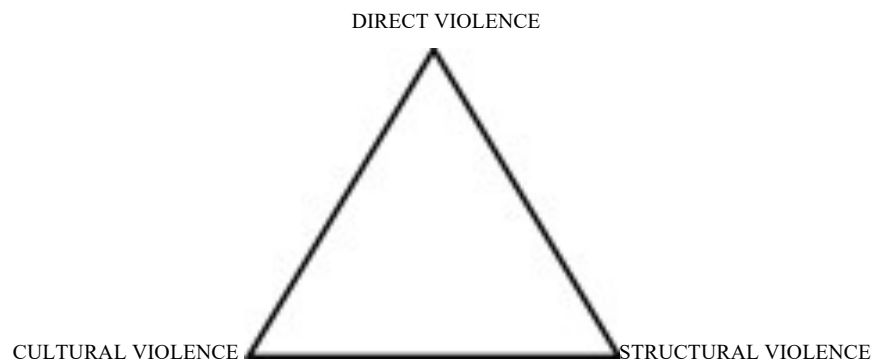
people, state violence, the patriarchy, and intersections of race, class, gender etc. in her book “Freedom is a constant struggle”. She discusses civil rights and movements against oppression and why these must incorporate intersectional aspects on the path to freedom as struggles against all forms of discrimination and violence must work together. Yuval-Davis argues that the majority of theories about nation, collective struggles and nationalism, are male centered and overlooks gender relations (*Gender and Nation* 1997:1f) [further reading see “Women Citizenship and Difference” 1997]. Reports about the situation in Israel-Palestine and current events are frequently published online [See locally active NGOs *B’Tselem* and *Kvinna till Kvinna*].

A last note, the ambition of this study is not to put blame on the Israeli people or oppose that they too are impacted by this conflict, but it is beyond the scope of this study as well as its purpose to inquire further investigation.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Galtung's three forms of Violence

The theory working as operative in this study is the framework of Johan Galtung. Galtung has contributed to the field of Peace and Conflict immensely and in his classic article *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research* Galtung construes peace as “the absence of violence” (1969:168). He argues, “Violence is present when human beings are influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (1969:167) in turn, violence is the anti-thesis of peace (Galtung & Fischer,2013:35). His way of making distinction between different forms of violence has fundamentally changed the way in which we view and understand violence, he argues; the concept of both peace and violence has to be analyzed in a broader understanding just like conflict has to be understood as multifaceted, hence he developed the term *structural violence* (Aggestam & Höglund,2017:26f) Violence exists in three inter-related forms (Galtung & Fischer,2013:35) as demonstrated below.



(Source: *The Basic Needs Approach*, 1980 :12)

Violence arrive at different moments and can start in any of the triangle's corner (1990:294,302). *Direct violence* is visible and the most obvious form of violence. Galtung defines it as 'physical harming other humans with intention' (Johansen,2014:27). It is executed by actors e.g., nations, warfare between countries, sexual assault and 'kills quickly'. It can generally be measured in terms of casualties and physical injuries.

*Structural violence* on the other hand is indirect and “kills slowly”. Defined by Galtung as 'harm to humans as a result of injustices in our societies' indirectly or directly imposed by violent structures; political, economic or social (1969:179f). They occur as a result of inequality in society e.g., discrimination towards minorities and women, preventing them people from basic needs such as healthcare (ibid.).

*Cultural violence*, a term Galtung introduced later in the article “*Cultural Violence*” (1990) indicates when violence is legitimized through culture (Galtung & Fischer,2013:35). It’s a process and often internalized view of *the Self and the Other* in a society where culturally *the Self* is superior and *the Other* may be dehumanized, seen as second class citizen based on e.g., religion, gender, race, language, and using beliefs about *the Other* as central arguments when stereotyping, victim-blaming and deliberately exhausting resources, hindering others to use their language or religion, and by this justify *direct* and *structural violence*. All forms of violence can leave people with psychological injuries (Galtung,1990:292ff). The figure below further explains Galtung’s theory and will help us when exploring the complexity of the phenomenon violence.<sup>1</sup>

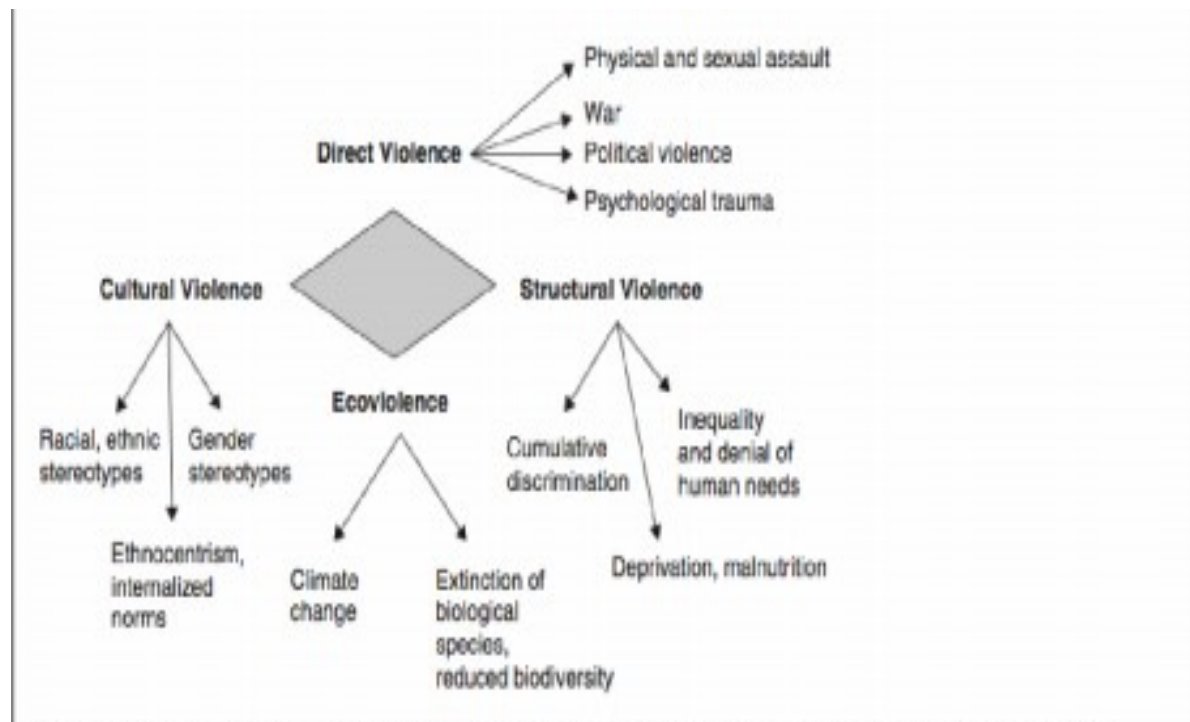


Figure 1. The Violence Diamond. Source: Kurtz & Kurtz (2015: 2); Galtung (1990)

- Ecoviolence is not covered in this study

### 2.1.1 Galtung's Peace

Peace doesn't mean absolute absence of conflict, but absence of all forms of violence. Then what is to be achieved to attain peace according to Galtung? Firstly, he divides peace into two crucial types: *negative peace* and *positive peace*. *Negative peace* implies the absence of physical violence but is an unjust system of peace as other types of violence are present. *Positive peace* is peacebuilding and permeated by progressing elements, preventing future violence by for example dialogue, building alliances and improving the society as a whole (Sandole, 2010, Galtung & Fischer, 2013:39ff). In 1990 Galtung broadens his perception of peace, arguing it's **solely** attained when; *direct peace+structural peace+cultural peace* are achieved; the antitheses to his three types of violence.

## 2.2 Standpoint Feminism

For decades Standpoint Feminism (SPF) originating in Marxist theory about slave/master relations, has challenged the androcentric notion of knowledge (Tickner, 1993:8). In this study, SPF works both theoretically and methodologically (the latter discussed in following chapter). SPF argues that women's issues are neglected and viewed as isolated issues, when in fact women are the subjects and authors of knowledge. A nexus of SPF is highlighting women's stories, narratives and personal experiences put into a broader cultural framework and power structures (IEP). Tickner along with many feminist scholars argue how the discourse far too long has been permeated by privileged androcentric, Eurocentric and heterosexist schemes, which Harding denotes has led to inaccuracies about the oppressed as well as the oppressors (2004:5). Just as in Marx's notion of slave and master, the slave, the oppressed group, has their own critical understanding, and are oppressed in divergent forms, giving them unique insights into the dominant group and the system in which they are being oppressed (Harding, 2004:5,9, Tickner, 2014:3,87). The dominant researchers in this field; Tickner, Sangster and Harding seek to further add to the collective of feminist discourses and reveal intersections with other forms of oppressions (Harding, 2004:1ff). Epistemologically the concept of intersectionality is developed by SPF theories.

## 2.3 Yuval-Davis

As this study is about struggles and intersectional perspectives, I will be drawing from Yuval Davis' research. I believe this perspective is useful when understanding and analyzing complex oppressions and how they intersect. Intersectional perspectives broaden the understanding of the social world. It claims that depending on the situated social, political and cultural structures the experiences of the marginalized persons social difficulties cannot be categorized separately, but must be understood as an intersection: "to carry out intersectional analysis, we cannot homogenize the ways any political project or claiming affect people..."(2011:4)An intersectional perspective in line with Yuval-Davis argues that oppressions and discrimination based on gender, class, race and so forth intersect and impact each other and have to be analyzed accordingly, nonetheless, they all have their own ontological meanings (2006:197,2011:3). Understanding gender, nation and nationalism is crucial because they define each other, who and who isn't included in the nation and views on womanhood/manhood. Internalizing the nation-imposed attributes on one's identity may unfold when struggling for equality and must be prevented. Furthermore, gender equality and nationalism vis-à-vis can be contesting discourses. Yuval-Davis argues the correlation between nationalism and its power over people and their bodies. Much focus in **nation-building** is placed on kinship and populating the nation hence pressures women into giving birth. It's not possible to distinguish public and private domains completely because one cannot be conscious of the public without knowledge of the private and both are needed in a nation. If the private one is excluded in the discourse, then so are women (1997:8,15,29f).

# 3 Research Design

## 3.1 Methodology

This study has been conducted based on a qualitative research approach. The RQ(s) controls the method and how the question is to be approached (Höglund, 2011:115). To operationalize the study interviews were conducted and analyzed with the chosen theories of the previous chapter e.g. I chose to ask my respondents a number of questions regarding violence, discrimination, difficulties and gender equality. By doing this I am seeking to answer the RQ's about Palestinian women's life under occupation and their struggle(s).

Höglund (2011) argues that for an interview to achieve maximum impact it is preferable that such interview is conducted in person as there are benefits to being there physically and putting oneself in their context, both culturally and socially. Fieldwork in form of interviews was conducted in Israel-Palestine and deemed a fundamental part of the study; it was useful to be in the same geographical landscape as the people interviewed, reaching an understanding of the political and social landscape, thereby reaching people and perspectives which I don't believe would have been possible over the phone.

This study consists of eight interviews, therefore, that the same results would have been achieved in a different setting, is implausible, hence, the reliability in this study is adequately low, which isn't uncommon in qualitative research (David & Sutton, 2016:33). The purpose of including reliability in a study is to measure whether the study would achieve the same results at another time, i.e., the extent of consistency of the indicator (ibid.:220). When the indicator is accurate it's possible to discover variances between studies ensuring that results from one study can be replicated by someone else at another time, though elimination of all errors is highly unlikely (ibid., Kvale & Brinkmann,2014). The purpose of this study was to create a deeper understanding for a specific context, not to be compared to previous studies. A qualitative study like this gives an opportunity to come up with new questions to expand on existing theory[ies], which then can be developed into a replicable experimental study that can be generalized in the future.

When it comes to interview-based empiricism, the inconsistency may come from the fact that the interviewees may give different answers from time to time, nonetheless, it is people's reflections and how people react to their reality even if that is not how it is (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). In order to decrease this risk, efforts to be transparent in the methodology have been made, giving other researchers insight into the procedures.

The purpose of including validity is to understand in what magnitude a study's method actually measures and construes the concepts which the instruments are meant to do (David & Sutton, 2016:33,222). If the method does analyze what it indicates to analyze then the qualitative research can lead to valid scientific knowledge (Kvale & Brinkmann,2014:296f). Through the interviews the researcher, myself, has been able to be a part of the participants' experiences and from this claim can be made that the study has validity. Since qualitative studies tend to have a widespread methodology the results could be interpreted differently and there may be questions about the validity of these studies (ibid.).

Internal validity raises the possibilities to capture individuals own experiences, to analyze these and develop an understanding for the meaning of what a certain social problem may have for a specific group. However, this possibility does incorporate a loss of external validity and generalization to a bigger reality. The function of external validity is to decide how well collected data matches the bigger world. This study can with its internal validity contribute to scientific research and previous literature on oppression, intersectional perspectives and women's lives under occupation, notwithstanding the results cannot be generalized to a grander reality but as David & Sutton point out, internal validity is to be prioritized in a qualitative study (David & Sutton,2016:33f, Kvale & Brinkmann,2014:296f).

## 3.2 Material

The majority of material used in this study consists of interviews. The conducted interviews are primary material i.e., data collected empirically (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:87). The secondary material, i.e., previously existing sources (ibid.), will be reviewed in the form of reports, news articles and academic literature. Firstly, attention has been paid to potential bias in the material. To avoid bias, evaluation has been applied in accordance with Bryman's triangulation; examining the consistency of the source, e.g., the source has been examined at different occasions and have been compared to other sources on the same subject, both sources with similar and dissimilar viewpoints. When they have considerably differentiated from other



sources they have not been used (2008:562ff). Secondly, all material has been scrutinized employing only the information which has high validity. Thirdly, news articles and scholarly literature in any language other than English and Swedish have not been included, excluding all local sources in Arabic or Hebrew.

### 3.2.1 The interviews

There are many ways a researcher can conduct interviews, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, group interviews and the like. For this study, the selected method is the semi-structured interview, which includes planned questions and themes but is also flexible, allowing the interviewer to work more openly (Alvesson,2011:16f) e.g., questions and themes were planned to be covered in the study, but this approach allowed me to conduct the interviews with certain fluidity. As a result, the respondents were able to express their views and dictate the direction of the discussion, enabling me to pose relevant follow up questions.

Interviews were conducted in five cities in the OPTs: Bethlehem, East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron and Nabi Saleh and took place between the dates of May 6th and May 18th, 2016, with the exception of the last interview which was conducted over the phone on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The recorded interviews rang between 34 and 51 minutes, respectively. Each interview was conducted individually and face-to-face, with only me and the respondent present. Of the eight interviews, three were conducted in the homes of the respondents, at their behest, because it was the place in which they felt most comfortable. Two of the interviews were conducted at a coffee shop; and the two interviews with NGO-workers were conducted in their offices.

The way in which the respondents were classified was based on a system of naming them by the moniker “Informant Person” (IP), followed by a unique interview number e.g., IP1. My respondents and I always spoke English, as I do not speak Arabic. I did not perceive this to be a problem, as all participants spoke English well. As a result, I did not feel the need to hire an interpreter, which initially was the plan. On the one hand, the respondents could have expressed themselves more freely with an Arabic interpreter present and there might have been nuances in the discussion that were lost; on the other hand, there was an advantage in being alone and speaking directly with the respondent without having an interpreter present which could potentially have influenced the answers, although one cannot eliminate the possibility that some

information was lost, since English is not the first language of either the interviewer or the interviewee. The choice to exclude non-English speakers was conscious and I did not perceive it to compromise the quality of the contents, however, possibility that this choice may have biased the responses cannot be excluded (Loui-Beck et al.,2004:970f).

The interviews were recorded on a smartphone. When transcribing an interview, there is no universal design, but rather the choice of the researcher to decide upon the amount of information and what is essential (Kvale & Brinkmann,2009:197). Nearly every spoken word on the recordings was transcribed, for simplicity and to be certain all details were included; to make it easier analyzing the interviews. A few things were left out of the transcription; names and places which I could not understand, and, in two instances, where personal and emotional experiences were discussed. In parts of the transcripts grammar has been corrected. In the transcription, there was no emphasis or inclusion of voice factors, laughter, pauses, et cetera, as this has no relevance to this study. Following the transcription, I reviewed the interviews and separated them into themes.

The initial plan was for ten interviews to be conducted; however due to events beyond my control two of the interviews never took place. In total, eight interviews were conducted, and subsequently analyzed for this study.

### 3.2.2 The respondents

Before setting up interviews with potential respondents certain requirements had to be established: they identify as women, they live in the OPTs, they are above the age of 21, they're Palestinian or work with Palestinian women. The respondents ranged between the ages of 21 and 50. Aims were made to include women are engaged in different fields, NGO workers, students, activists, waitresses et cetera. However, age, occupation or religious views were not salient factors in the selection of respondents but were made based on the assumption that people, depending on their age and occupation have divergent perspectives.

Several strategies were used in order to select my respondents. Three of them through a form of convenience sampling where I had easy access to the respondents (Bryman, 2012:201). Prior to my fieldwork, the contact between one of my NGO-respondents and I had been established through a mutual acquaintance in Sweden. The two of them had worked together in the Gaza Strip years earlier. One respondent was found online in a social forum in Bethlehem. My third respondent was selected due to wanting to include the perspective from a

specific women's rights NGO in East Jerusalem. The last five of my respondents were selected through snowball sampling, a common and relevant approach for qualitative interviews where one makes initial contact with relevant people for the study and they refer you to other people who can be of interest for the study. One acquaintance who had guided me through Ramallah set me up with a friend of hers and also an activist whom she had met during a protest. A common critique of both the snowball and convenience sampling is that it's an improbable representation of the population and therefore, it is not possible to generalize the findings (Bryman, 2002:196,201f). This study is not aiming at describing a generic truth or generalization nor collecting a large amount of data, hence snowball and convenience sampling is in line with my defined purpose, and although the scope is narrow and the sample limited and conclusions for the entity of the population cannot be drawn, this is usually the case in qualitative studies (Patton, 2002).

### 3.3 Ethical considerations

Qualitative interviews may appear casual, but, Kvale argues, in reality a research interview is not a discussion between two equivalent peers, but rather a researcher who regulates the conversation (1997). Feminist scholars have written extensively on the subject [see Sangster, Harding, Harroway, Stacey) and for advice I turned to the methodological framework of SPF. This method stresses the importance of taking into account background, culture and political structures that one encounters in the interview process, asserts that an interview should be “a historical document created by the agency of both the interviewer and the interviewee,” (Sangster, 1994:10f). I had to acknowledge my own privilege and my own standpoint. There are several documented standards with regards to the employment of ethical research practices within the humanistic and social sciences fields, discussed and exemplified in much scholarly literature [for example Kvale & Brinkmann 2014, Fontana & Frey 2005]. When conducting interviews Hedin points to the importance to emphasize a code of ethics, for the protection and comfort of the participants (2006:5). I elected to adhere to the ethical foundation developed by the Swedish Research Council and discussed in Teorell & Svensson's book “Att fråga och att svara” (2007). Stated in these guidelines are, paraphrasing the original Swedish; the respondents may not be exposed to humiliation or violence in any way, nor any physical or psychological

harm as a result of the study Furthermore, they point to the council's emphasis on what is expressed as the cornerstone of their ethical guidelines, that is, "protecting the individual". There are four central pillars of this mission: firstly, the requirement of consent - the participants are autonomous in presiding over the extent of their involvement; secondly, the requirement of information - the participating actors must be fully informed as to the purpose of the research; thirdly, the requirement of confidentiality - the participants' information is highly confidential; and lastly, the requirement of useful claim - the information gathered about individuals may only be used for the purpose of research, and not for unrelated pursuits (2007:21f). Feminist ethical obligations call attention to; we can also see to the material being accessible to the respondents and make sure not to intentionally misconstrue or caricature their lives (Sangster, 1994:12f).

In the process of conducting this research, these ethical guidelines were kept in mind not only during the physical fieldwork itself, but also in the editing process. I am confident that I have adhered to these standards to the best of my ability. The ethical standards and methods employed in this study met the rules and regulations as I made sure all of my respondents were adults over the age of 21 - this was the minimum age I decided, based on the age of informed consent. The respondents gave their consent before, during and after the interviews. I have been in contact with all respondents after the interviews and made sure they continue to fully understand the purpose of this study. I have laid out the main conditions of their participation, namely assuring that they will remain anonymous; that the recordings will be for my ears only, without the incorporation of an interpreter or a third party of any kind, and that the power, to end the interview was always in their hands. Not all participants were concerned with anonymity, but I chose to exclude their names partially because names have no relevance to the study, and partially due to the fact that one of the respondents who waived anonymity was undocumented, another an activist having spent time in Israeli prison. Even with their permission, I did not feel comfortable disclosing their names.

Before conducting the interviews, I was aware of the fact that sexual violence had the potential to be a sensitive subject and attempted to take as many steps as possible to avoid triggering any of the respondents. Someone who has suffered trauma can, when asked about their experience, be accentuating their traumatic experience. Further, and especially when it comes to victims of sexual violence, Ford et. al. conclude that it "requires a heightened level of sensitivity to a range of issues such as religious beliefs, cultural and social values, the legal environment, and gender issues" (2009). I had no questions linked explicitly to the subject of

sexual assault, but there were two instances in which I stopped the recording because the subject did come up, and it was, in fact, a sensitive one.

A quote which has followed me throughout the process of writing this thesis is “*who has the right to write whose history*” (Sangster,1994:12). My respondents never gave the impression that they were troubled or uncomfortable with my research or my questions nor did they ever abstain from replying to them, vis-à-vis, the majority of the participants disclosed their deep conviction and hope for more people around the world to become aware of and engaged in the situation of Palestinians, including the diaspora. Six of the respondents were also very positive towards research being done on Palestinian women’s lives and struggles. This response meets the principle that research should benefit the participants in some explicit way (Ford et. al 2009).

Being an outsider (a non-member of the population) has limitations, but, Dwyer & Buckle argue, allows for space ‘insiders’ have difficulty to enter. Supposing one doesn’t share e.g., ethnicity or language, factors as age, common experience and interest can reduce barriers and power imbalance (2009:54,58). My gender, and I believe also my nationality was to advantage considering; Sweden’s recent recognition of Palestine’s statehood, several Swedish organizations are active the OPTs and work closely with Palestinian women’s rights organizations (e.g., Kvinna till Kvinna, SSU:s Kvinnogrupper, SIDA). Before each interview the respondent and I spent time getting to know each other, which possibly contributed to reducing being perceived as outsider.

## 4 Findings & Analysis

This chapter contains the findings of the eight conducted interviews along with the analysis, in accordance with the theoretical frameworks presented in Ch. 2. Throughout this study I have presented arguments that one cannot fully separate various forms of oppressions, neither the struggles against them, as they intersect and impact each other, hence we have to analyze them that way. However, in order to code the findings, I have divided them into separate themes, although often overlapping as we will see.

### 4.1 Gender & Violence in the Occupation

The respondents were asked how they experience occupational violence and difficulties they are exposed to, and if they think it's different for them based on their gender. All respondents except IP2 expressed difficulty in separating the occupational violence and the patriarchy (not all used the term patriarchy, instead culture or their own group).

IP5, passes **checkpoints** daily traveling to work at an NGO in Ramallah, she says it's difficult because it's impossible knowing how long it will take or how many checkpoints are open, and she sees people "in little fences trying to go through". She explains that documents need to be ad hoc but for her as a foreigner, it's easier:

*"As an individual it's mostly about the stress related of being in a militarized society seeing soldiers everywhere and having the constant feeling of what can they do and what are they doing and what are they capable of doing"*

IP2 born in Nicaragua to a Palestinian father, moved to a small village in the OPTs as a child, her mother stayed behind and so did her birth certificate. Having no documents proofing either nationality she explains she is undocumented but hassles her way through checkpoints and finds alternative ways to cross them. She only discusses the occupation briefly, saying that after her boyfriend was killed in the recent uprisings she chooses to focus on other things because she cannot live her whole life in anger, she says life under occupation is all she knows; she is not scared.

Flying checkpoints, which the IDF can put up at any time make it even more unsafe for women to move outside (Anderson, 2015). Six of the women talk about the sexual and/or oral harassment by soldiers they have experienced at checkpoints and violence from settlers, even children. IP1 from Hebron explains how she has less freedom now:

*"I have to have my brother walk with me through checkpoints because of what's been happen here lately. Imagine a man with a machine gun stopping you at a checkpoint and his flirting with you. I don't know what they think it's so crazy".*

She says that she several times has been denied when asking for a female soldier to perform the body search. IP3 says that overall, the occupation affects men more physically but IDF's harassment of women at checkpoints is common and strategic. IP8 explains that after the Second Intifada a lot of women stopped going to school and university because they and their families are afraid of violence from settlers and the checkpoints. IP4 witness how women have given birth at checkpoint having been denied going through. IP5 & IP4 both NGO workers view the occupation as patriarchal, and discuss the Palestinian uprising taking place six months earlier, and the following intensified, deliberate attacks on women by IDF.

*The whole issue of like perceived insecurities, of ideas of there being checkpoints even though it has gotten better, you know people still have an idea that they have to protect their girls from like this movement. And then whether or not if they use that as an argument or weather that's what they really feel, again that doesn't really matter you know. And there was, there's a similar discussion in there about rape, you know women can't be out on their own cause there's a risk for rape but that's like the same as you know the discussion about rape in Sweden (IP5).*

When occupational violence increases families become more protective of the women and as a consequence they are bound to stay at home. IP4 tells me stories from women she has encountered in her professional life, for instance:

*"...a young activist who started to get a little bit too much power and becoming a bit too important in Silwan, and basically Israel were able to use things like rumors about her sexuality and use you know like different types of stories to put her back in place. So, it's a combination of that because of the occupation in East Jerusalem does not have formal security system for Palestinians combined with patriarchal being able to use young women's sexuality as a way to oppress them".*

IP4 calls it "double force of male domination". She gives another example, when IDF arrest a man they may threaten him by saying they will find and rape his sister or put his mother in jail.

She further explains that they deliberately touch on family honor knowing this will affect the person so he may confess to things which he has never done. IP8 and IP3, the two respondents with children explain how they worry about them all the time, of them being arrested but also hurt by the civilian violence from the settlers. One of them tells of how she has tried not to transfer her worry to her children but that it is hard.

Several bring up the fundamental role Palestinian women have played in the resistance and that much of the IDF violence “it’s not about who you are, but what you are doing” (IP7) and “The one who resists you kill” (IP3). They explain that Israel knows that Palestinian women are frontline fighters in the struggle against the occupation hence they are being targeted and imprisoned. Both men and women may be killed when clashes arise. IP3, who documents occupational violence against women also says, that targeting women and children is partly due to tactics of showing that Palestinian men, the main protectors cannot protect their own families “...it’s kind of collective punishment that we will kill your women and your children if you keep resisting the occupation” but goes on to say that she still takes her son and daughter to the weekly demonstration against the settlement surrounding her village.

IP3 has spent time in Israeli prison twice. She talks about the prison time and that there were young girls, children imprisoned. She explains how the food was barely eatable and the conditions overall horrible. The prison guards spoke to them in Hebrew and would refuse to speak Arabic or English. The women in the prison would teach each other Hebrew in order to make their prison life easier. There is a constant fear of sexual abuse and harassment toward female prisoners.

IP6 says “I don’t like to distinguish between girls and boys when it comes to the occupation. Security and checkpoint are the same no matter what your gender is.” The worst consequences of the occupation, she says, “we don’t have our own natural resources, our own water supply, own electricity basic sources. We cannot develop as a country because of it.”

## 4.2 Gender & Violence within

*But I will tell you, whenever there is more violence in general you will find more domestic violence because it is all a cycle, everyone wants to let the anger out so there is more and more and more violence.” IP4*



All the women recognize their society being far from equal. I asked questions about their experience of patriarchal violence and difficulties in society, based on their gender. IP6 doesn't discuss the subject much, stating that gender inequalities are due to the occupation. IP3 takes a similar standpoint:

*Then man who was stopped at the way to his work at checkpoint being humiliated, beaten up in a very bad way and they didn't allow him to go to his work and force him to go back to his house so the minute he's inside the house anybody who do anything he will release his stress and his anger to his family and not bringing home a salary.*

She explains that the increasing injustices in their society, honor killings, domestic violence and the upswing of Islamic Movements is due to the occupation. She highlights, however that in her village women are more equal and work outside the home than other parts of the OPTs.

A different standpoint is taken by IP1 & IP2, the only two women under 25. They consider the structures within their society to be their biggest concerns. They both express their wishes to be free. IP1, living in central Hebron explains how the city is conservative and that she has a hard time with the culture for restricting women's lives.

*I love to do whatever I want. This is the biggest struggle for me, this is a big issue in my life. And it's not easy. Especially not when you're standing alone and you have no supporters. They want to decide everything for me, women oppress women and force them, not only men."*

She and IP2 are both considering their society to be limiting women; they should marry young, stay home, cook clean and raise children. They tell me about their own experiences of sexual violence and the stigma talking about it, hence, not reporting it. IP2 tells me how her father took her to the doctor to see if she was still a virgin. She mentions how bigger cities such as Ramallah is freer and she left her father's house a few years ago, it was tough but she's happy. She says that if you stay where you grew up the only roles for you are traditional roles. The young men can do what they want, she says, but young women are not. IP5 discusses the growing conservatism in the OPTs:

*..." the classic argument of women, peace and security that conditions get conditions that oppress women are just heightened and reinforced during time of conflict and you see many examples of that here, and you see many things from*

*women not getting the same attention both as victims and as activists... as the conditions get more tense the more stressful than we believe that more young women start wearing hijab because their families are putting pressure on them because there's the concept of what you can control so you can control your family if you can't control what's going on outside." (IP5)*

Four respondents mention discriminating laws as being one of the main issues facing women. IP4 says the occupation prevents juridical legislatives, resulting in upholding discriminatory laws e.g., on land and inheritance, the absence of family laws and a constitution, instead partly having Egyptian and Jordanian laws working as legal frameworks in the OPTs. P3 point to the Jordanian law that if a man kills a woman for “honor” it can be viewed as an honor defense, meaning he could be released after one year. But if a woman kills her husband, she’s facing 15 years. IP5 explains how women in political parties are not given higher seats or positions, contributing to patriarchal norms.

#### 4.2.1 Analysis – Intersection

IP4 told me that in order for her to travel with her son she needs her husband’s approval due to their different ID’s and approved documents from Israel. This is an example of patriarchy and occupation intersecting and restricting women.

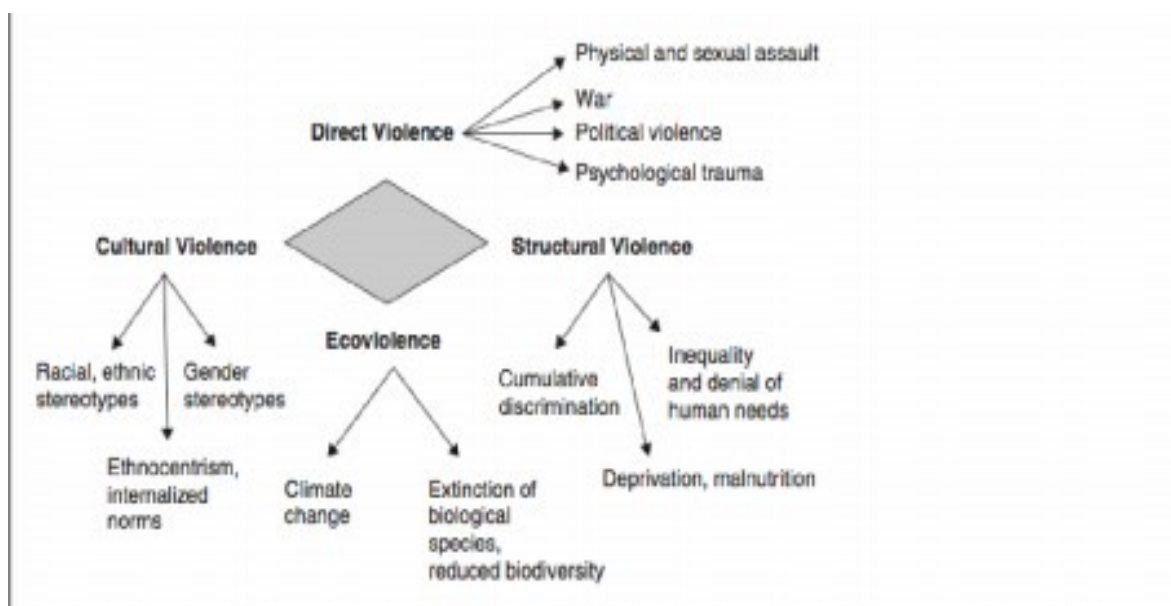


Figure 1. The Violence Diamond. Source: Kurtz & Kurtz (2015: 2); Galtung (1990)

Each of the women have stories about violence under the patriarchy and/or occupation.

The majority experience the occupation and patriarchy fundamentally in their life. In line with Galtung's theories the violence is *direct*, 'physical harming other humans with intention' in the form of political violence in clashes with IDF and settlers, harassment at checkpoints, and sexual and physical abuse, in prison and at home, pointing to the correlation of violence from the occupation and domestic, stated in three interviews. Women have no obvious place to report violent acts from soldiers, settlers or their society.

The respondents experience the occupation intensifies domestic violence. Galtung defines psychological scars as a form of violence which two of the respondents witnessed about, having been sexually abused, risking victim-blaming if disclosing. IDF and the family restricting their movements mean they relate to both patriarchy and occupation – also in being women seen as inferior in society hindering her by discriminating laws and IDFs separation of Palestinians and the Self. It can be argued women are being othered by both society and occupation. The fear or perception of violence is perhaps the most discussed one in the interviews. Knowing that IDF can use your gender and harass you as well as male members of your community. Even if women don't view it as a such the family might use it as an argument of keeping her at home. Basic needs are prevented, women going to work and school and accessing hospitals. The occupational power uses women's bodies, taking advantage of the patriarchal norms in the OPTs, threatening men they will hurt their female family members if not complying.

*Cultural violence* is also present in these oppressions. Children of settlers learn stereotyping Palestinians and thinking harassing them is acceptable, maybe that can be called culturally inheriting ethnocentrism. IP6 discussed preventing the OPTs from developing and having their own resources which can be seen as structural violence, economical violence.

These violence intersect and are hard to separate from one and other at times. All forms of violence fit in the interviews. Perhaps the reason checkpoints were majorly discussed, except for the reason of restricting the everyday movement checkpoints, is that it's a direct act of discrimination, showing the patriarchy and occupation intersecting.

## 4.3 Conditions in the Struggle

Oppressed people struggle in different ways, even within the same context (Yuval-Davis). The respondent's shared their views and experiences on patriarchy and occupation with me. Struggling for gender equality is complex but IP2 says, "we know how to fight, we know our rights, and we don't lose hope easily". I asked them about their view on gender equality in the OPTs, the impact the occupation brings on the struggle and doors closing but also opening due to the occupation.

### 4.3.1 Views on Gender equality

The respondents were divided regarding gender equality and the struggle towards it. IP3 and IP6, both active in the resistance against the occupation, position themselves in similar ways when I ask about this subject. IP6 explains how working towards equity during occupation is much harder because of it, but the national struggle needs to be the primary one because, "Israel's goal is to fragmentize the Palestinian population, and if we are fragmentized, we cannot fight for anything". IP3 explains why she thinks gender equality has to come post-occupation.

*"The occupation is all we can battle right now and the internal issues we have to solve later.....occupation is stealing your hopes, your dreams, your future and is killing everything beautiful inside you and he will turn you to a machine that you just have to eat, to sleep never to think about anything else."*

On the contrary, IP1, IP2 and IP7, all women under 25 exclaim that gender equality is more important than any other struggle. "I think like we have to fix that before we get our national freedom" (IP7). IP2 standpoint is "You know, so it's the same for our culture here that we will not have a different life. It will be actually worse if we don't have the occupation. Because maybe now the world sees what's going."

*"Because always the women have been told that first we have to end the occupation and then you call for your rights so the struggle, that's why women have been struggling until this moment to obtain equal rights while we have also the occupation because women have also participating in the political arena and in the political struggle as to end occupation parallel, they're also fighting for obtaining their rights, their full woman's rights" (IP4)*

The NGO-workers and IP8 clearly state struggle for gender equality and against occupation have to be conducted at the same time i.e., one cannot be achieved without the other. IP2 has similar views saying, “I mean any time is the right time, like everywhere else, it's a constant battle, it doesn't stop because there's war”.

#### 4.3.2 Conditions for Gender Equality

Understanding power structures, SPF state women's narratives and issues as crucial knowledge including their critical insights vis-à-vis the oppressors (Harding, 2004:5). Looking at intersections and tensions between oppressions and struggles, I raised questions regarding the conditions under occupation to struggle for gender equality. IP4 expressed the following, impacting, my analysis of the study:

*People have a lot of ideas of how a women's rights movement should be coordinated and how much in agreement it should be... a lot of people make comments saying that there's really not a women's rights movement here but I've been spending a lot of time thinking what a political movement is and what a women's movement is but I think at the end of the day like if you have a fair enough number people who all struggle for essentially the same thing no matter how they're doing to get there it's good enough and that exists. Under very difficult circumstances.*

IP5 & IP8 talk about opportunities that come with international funding directed towards women's organization i.e.

*“EU funded a big inheritance project together, implemented by the Danish together with three- or four-women's rights organizations, Palestinian organizations and they did a lot to move ahead the realizations of women's rights to inheritance”*

IP5 discusses International solidarity and women's movements around the globe and see the possibility of linking international solidarity and funding as a way of like use it to their advantage but *also saying*: You can definitely make the argument that international funding has killed Palestinian volunteering in civil society and engagement you know. “IP2 says “women are raised to be tough because of the occupation”, and it brings everyone together in the fight arguing men have to be a part of the discourse. IP1 has been a member of NGO's in Hebron and

shares her positive views it impacted her life, being able to meet foreigners and gain new perspectives to life. IP7 says that the example of IDF targeting men and women alike is the ultimate proof that in reality, men are not more powerful than women.

IP3 highlights the huge role women have played in the resistance since the beginning of the occupation during the British mandate. And goes on to say that many women are fighting by just being home, refusing to leave their land raising the children.

*“Conflict can be what changes things upside down and see greater possibilities for women in every ways like because when I worked in Kosovo, before and in Kosovo there was like, it was a really basic situation where they are really poor you know when Nato had finished their bombing all of the int org came in then it went from a society where women weren't necessarily allowed to go unaccompanied onto the street at night and certainly not in company of men who weren't their family members and then it was like whoever can get a job should get a job so that meant like if you were, because that means you're gonna have to be like spending time with a man in the car and he's not a family member there was none of that and that actually probably had a very big impact in the lives of women because all of a sudden they were the ones going out and getting salaries and they had access to a forum where they could spend time with men that weren't from their family, so that changed a lot of things very quickly, but that hasn't happened here I would say.*

An overwhelming majority of the conditions under occupation are seen as constraining the struggle towards gender equality. But some of the women point to brighter moments. It raises questions about what a movement is and means to these individuals.

## 5 Conclusion

My material shows that while there is an agreement among the eight women that the occupational force and the patriarchy are factors contributing to the lives of women in the OPTs, the way to currently battle them differs. This study purpose was seeking to answer how Palestinian women in the OPTs experience occupation and patriarchy in terms of physical and structural violence, in accordance with SPF; highlighting narratives and women's stories under occupation. Gender and nation are hard to separate but to understand the concepts and what they mean in different contexts one has to include the ones who are facing them, and most likely know them better than anyone what constrains and enables a struggle. The women positioned themselves as fighters, each with their own views and experiences.

The study proved more challenging than anticipated because of the narrow scope. Future research could include adding intersectional perspectives such as class and sexuality and the discourse of gender equality in the whole society, including other groups such as men and children hence reaching a broader understanding of conditions which may enable or constrain the struggle for equality. By combining violence in all its forms with feminist theories and research, new progressive theories may arise which will further help us to understand what marginalized groups and individuals are facing and combating in society. This study concludes that intersectional perspectives are vital to understand people's struggles as well as oppressional power structures. Nonetheless this study gives some insight in eight women's life under occupation, their struggles, and their struggles within the most visible struggles.

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