

Sustainable Change for Development (SCD)

**A Research Paper on:
“Reality of the Social Violence in Balata
Refugees Camp”, Reasons, Results and
Proposed Interventions**

Prepared by: Mr. Waseem Burghal

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	Error! Bookmark not defined.
First: Methodology and Study Objectives.....	4
1.1 Study Methodology	5
1.2 Study Scope	5
1.3 Study Objectives	6
1.4 Main Questions of the Study	6
Second: Reality of Violence in Palestinian Refugees Camps	7
Third: Reality of Social Violence in Balata Refugees Camps	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Fourth: Reasons and Forms of the Phenomenon of Social Violence in Balata Camp	11
Fifth: Impact of Violence on Youth Participation and Engagment in the public context within the camp	14
Sixth: Consequences of Violence on Youth and its Impact on Gender	16
Seventh: Roles of Stakeholders and local institutions in mitigating Violence in the Camp	17
Eighth: Proposed Programs and Interventions to be implemented to Reduce the Phenomenon of Violence	18
Annexes and Attachments	23
Annex 1: List of workshops and meetings with service providers and target groups.....	23
Annex 2: Summary of the list of individual interviews with stakeholders (West Bank, Gaza Strip).....	23

Executive Summary

This research paper is prepared by the Sustainable Change for Development (SCD) to help understand the reality of social violence in Balata Refugees Camp in terms of "reasons, results and proposed interventions." It is aimed at studying the causes and potential effects of social violence on the people of Balata Refugees Camp, as well as the impact of violence on youth participation and engagement in this phenomenon and its impact on their social participation. Accordingly, a comprehensive work methodology has been adopted that included a review of several available studies and literature review on issues of social violence at the local and national levels. This is in addition to conducting a set of one-on-one interviews with several representatives of stakeholders and community institutions at the level of Balata Refugees camp. Also, holding a focused workshop with a sample of youth groups in the camp and of both sexes to discuss this phenomenon and its impact on the general context and the youth group in Balata Refugees camp.

Main Findings:

On the other hand, and regarding to the most prominent findings of this research paper, a set of main findings and conclusions can be pointed out as follows:

- ★ Results indicated that there are many reasons that contribute to the spread of violence in Balata Refugees camp. Most important reason of which is the role of the Israeli occupation in fueling the phenomenon of violence as well as disputes and conflicts between families and different political parties. In addition, the high poverty, unemployment and poor living conditions; as there is an increasing percentage of population suffering from the bad economic situation, lack of rights, marginalization, a poor level of basic services. All of which contributes to the creation a fertile environment for the widespread and the increasing levels of violence in the camp.
- ★ The results also indicated that the nature and behavior of violence practiced in the camp takes different forms depending on the nature and context of the conflicts that usually occur, which may include murders, assaults and injuries, burning and destruction of property belonging to the parties to the conflict, shootings and use of firearms and sharp tools. This being said, there were (10) killing since 2009 among the largest families in the camp, cases that remain unresolved until today. The interviewed stakeholders agreed that in recent years family disputes

have taken the largest share of the scale of other conflicts happened at the level of Balata Refugees camp.

- ★ Regarding to the impact of violence on youth and their engagement and participation in the public context in the camp, results showed that violence had serious negative impacts on youth, where they were being used as fuel for practicing violence that occurs and youth are often the victims of such events. The number of youth in Balata Refugees camp is estimated to be around (4700) persons in the age of (15-29) years. Results have also shown that there is a clear negative impact on youth participation and their engagement in society and their different roles, both in terms of community participation at the social and local institutions levels in terms of playing their active roles in reducing the phenomenon of violence in the camp.
- ★ There is a high percentage of youth people in the camp that are frustrated and desperate with high unemployment indicators and lack of access to decent work an. It is known that poverty and unemployment have profound negative impacts on the lives of individuals and youth in particular, where work is linked to indicators of quality of life and livelihoods. Hence, it is more difficult to build a better future without finding decent work, as it has a very serious and disturbing impact on social cohesion and the state of societal peace, creating an environment conducive to attracting and exploiting youth to participate and engage in various forms and behaviors of violence in the camp.
- ★ It may also be noted that violence has profound negative effects on youth in the social and psychological aspects. Despite the lack of data at the level of Balata Refugees camp, impacts may include physical damage such as injury, disability or getting killed, in addition to psychological and behavioral damage, violence can reinforce youth aggressive attitudes, cause isolation, as well as poor social integration and segregation from society.
- ★ Young people also reported many forms of social discrimination against camp residents affecting the youth group, because of the stereotype spread of Balata camp and the existence of unjust media coverage. All of this is causing the spread of an untrue bad reputation of the camp, which in turn restricts youth access to employment or public services in addition to other stereotypes of gender-based and related discrimination affecting girls' reality. Thus, such stereotypes restrict their chances or deprive them of getting married to someone outside the

camp because of the inferior and negative perception associated with Balata Camp by some people.

- ★ It may also be noted that there is a weakness in the roles of stakeholders and local institutions in reducing the phenomenon of violence in Balata camp. The positive impact on the phenomenon of violence and its consequences is a complex process and requires the synergy of efforts put on by many different official and community. Despite the importance of efforts made by community, institutions and community leaderships in Balata camp to reduce the phenomenon of violence and to protect community peace, such efforts remain limited and have a weak rather than widespread impact. Those efforts do not have sufficient potentials and weakly impact as well as limited adequate interventions, programs and services to improve the camp's status and impact youth in addition to reduce this phenomenon.

Summary of Recommendations and Interventions:

On the other hand, the paper contained several recommendations and suggestions on how to reduce the phenomenon of violence, as well as activate the role of community institutions and integrate youth in the efforts made to combat the phenomenon of violence, which included the following recommendations:

- ★ Strengthening the levels of cooperation, coordination and networking among stakeholders in order to reduce the phenomenon of violence, insecurity and the widespread use of weapons in Balata Refugees Camp, including (the local committee, camp institutions, security forces, law enforcement parties, reform committees, representatives of big families and citizens in the camp, including youth group).
- ★ Working on implementing integrated community interventions and programs that contribute to reducing the circle of violence and trying to mitigate its impact, as well as conducting comprehensive and integrated awareness-raising campaigns focused on the prevention of social violence and raising community awareness of the risks of social violence.
- ★ Working on attracting and engaging youth in the efforts made to reduce the phenomenon of violence, as well as enhancing their participation in programs and activities, by preparing mutual intervention plan among all institutional in the camp. Such intervention plan includes the implementation of social and cultural programs, interventions and activities aimed at providing an alternative for youth to spend their free times on it, as well as

enhancing their social participation and increasing their ability to influence the public context of the camp.

- ★ Preparing a strategic plan for the protection of community peace, in addition to organizing the "Code of Honor" campaign, which is implemented by youth and in cooperation with local institutions through which representatives of families, community leaders, local institutions and stakeholders sign a document of honor to commit to the protection of community peace and the prevention of violence.
- ★ Activating the role of the Community Reform Committee and form local networks for providing protection against violent behaviors with focusing on working and targeting families and families that are still in unresolved conflict and those who are most vulnerable to be engaged in future violence.
- ★ Developing a mechanism and specific procedures for monitoring, documenting, both violations of violence at camp-level and their consequences to provide adequate data to enhance the process of measuring the future results of interventions aimed at reducing the phenomenon of violence.
- ★ Working with media means and journalists to address the ethics of media coverage on Balata camp with the possibility of signing a code of honor for media, as well as focusing on targeting media professionals and social media influencers in Nablus to promote proper media coverage of social and cultural programs and activities carried out at the camp level.

First: Methodology and Study Objectives

1.1 Methodology

This researcher paper is based on the use of the qualitative results-enhanced analytical approach within the participatory research methodology, which is based on merging different research methods and tools. The proposed methodology included several stages and steps starting with the process of reviewing previous literature and studies, as well as conducting a series of meetings, interviews and focal groups (focus groups) with stakeholders in the study, as follows:

1.2 Conducting An Inception meeting with (SCD) institution

At the very beginning, a preliminary meeting was conducted with the staff of the Sustainable Change for Development (SCD), in order to be informed in details on nature of the task required as well as identifying the objectives and results expected to be achieved through the study. In addition to agreeing on the work methodology and the detailed implementation plan in the upcoming period.

2.2 Literature Review (Desk Review)

A comprehensive review of several studies, publications and literature at the national and local levels on the topic of this research paper was done. This is in order to collect detailed information on the phenomenon in question and its effects. The results of this phase were to be used in the preparing for the fieldwork phase and the collection of different information and data. The documents that have been reviewed included the following:

- ✦ Documents and publications on the concept of violence and its various causes, especially in Palestinian refugees' camps in the West Bank.
- ✦ Several documents on violence and its impact on the reality of youth in Palestine.
- ✦ Data received from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).
- ✦ Reports and other relevant documents.

3.2 Conducting in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders

This phase included holding a number of meetings and in-depth interviews with many parties and related representatives of community centres and institutions in Balata Refugees Camp as well as several stakeholders. Such meetings and interviews were held in order to analyze the reality of violence in Balata Refugees Camp and its impact on youth, their roles and their social participation. In addition to identifying the roles and responsibilities of those parties and their role in the implementation of programs and interventions that ensure the reduction of levels of violence in the camp. This is in addition to assessing the levels of partnership between local centres and institutions at the camp level and elsewhere. Individual

interviews included holding meetings with several authorities and stakeholders, where eight interviews were held at the camp level involving various stakeholders (Annex No. 1: List of interviews).

4.2 Conducting a meeting with a focus group of youth

In addition, a meeting was held with a focal group of youth, representing a sample of different groups of youth and representing the different neighbourhoods of the camp and different groups of youth such as the unemployed, university students, volunteers, communities and others. The meeting aimed to capture youth perspective on the direction, causes and effects of violence issues, as well as the role of community institutions in reducing the phenomenon of social violence and mechanisms that could be used to involve youth in proposed interventions and campaigns to reduce levels of violence at the camp level and their engagement in decision-making.

5.2 Analyzing findings and formulating the study

Once data collection process is completed, the researcher started working on analyzing the results and linking them within a common context that highlights the concept of the phenomenon in question. This is in order to propose interventions and recommendations aimed at enhancing youth participation in the overall context of violence in partnership with various community institutions at the camp level, in the light of qualitative results reached through interviews, group meetings and other research tools used in the study.

2.1 Study Scope

The requested task includes preparing a research paper entitled "The reality of social violence in Balata camp", proposed reasons, results and interventions", by studying the levels of building relationships and networks in the camp between youth and local institutions. In addition, it will identify social needs and challenges among society and discuss how violence has negatively affected community participation. Knowingly, the Palestinian society suffers from various forms of social violence that threatens community structures and negatively affects the lives of the Palestinian population, especially those living in the camps. Accordingly, Balata Refugees camp in Nablus Governorate is one of the most overpopulation camps, which suffers from high levels of social violence and the involvement of different groups of youth in this phenomenon, which limits the role of youth of being active and positively influential members of society. The study merely examined the reality of social violence in relation to social conflict without focusing on violence related to other aspects, such as domestic or gender-based violence.

3.1 Study Objectives

The research paper aims to study the causes and potential effects of social violence on the people of Balata camp, as well as the impact of violence on youth's participation and the extent of their involvement in this phenomenon and its impact on their social participation.

- ✳ Recognizing social needs and challenges in the society, especially for youth, and the impact of violence on their social engagement.
- ✳ Searching for youth's perspective and motivation factors to participate.
- ✳ Creating possibilities for building relationships and networks in the camp between youth and local institutions.

4.1 Main Questions of the Study

The main questions the study shall answer on the reality of community violence in Balata camp are as follows:

1. What are the reasons for social violence and its possible impact on the population in Balata camp?
2. What are the different forms of social violence in the camp and its effects?
3. What is the impact of violence on youth participation and involvement in the public context in the camp?
4. What is the impact of violence on girls' participation and females within the concept of gender in the camp?
5. What are the directions of youth and potential roles in reducing levels of violence in the camp?
6. What is the role of local stakeholders and institutions in reducing violence in the camp?
7. What are the programs and activities implemented by social institutions to reduce different forms of violence?
8. What are the proposed interventions to reduce the phenomenon of social violence in Balata camp?

Second: The Reality of Violence in Palestinian Refugees Camps

Violence of all kinds is one of the most significant phenomena affecting society, and the most dangerous. Perhaps, the existence of Israeli occupation and its destruction of the foundations and structures of the Palestinian economy and its punitive policies and violence against the Palestinian people add more to the challenges faced by the Palestinian citizen in general, which contributes to the creation of compelling conditions that affect livelihoods and generate psychological stress. Hence, Israeli occupation contributes in practicing various forms of violence and is a key factor in creating an environment that helps in increasing the phenomenon of internal violence in Palestinian society. Israeli

occupation also played an important role in fueling violence and internal conflicts, by supplying some camps with weapons through unauthorized arms dealers. Thus, Palestinian camps in the West Bank, amounted to 22 camps, suffer from repressive Israeli occupation policies that have had the largest share of the scale of attacks, military security campaigns, arrests, killings and various arbitrary practices.

In addition, Palestinian camps suffer from a reality that is considered the worst at the level of political, social and economic indicators. Notably, Palestinian camps suffer from difficult living

Data showed that Palestinian camps suffer from highest poverty rates. Some data also indicated that the indicators of the multi-dimensional poverty in camps are higher than in rural and urban areas. At the level of the head of the household, the percentage of poverty among refugees reached (31%), higher than the percentage among non-refugees by (18.9%)¹.

Refugees' camps in the West Bank suffer from marginalization and poor access to rights, poverty, unemployment and the poor level of services provided. Such challenges are obstacles in meeting the basic needs of the population, which has a negative impact helps in creating that kind of environment promoting individuals practicing violence as an alternative for marginalization, poor services and lack of basic rights, leading serious and disturbing results affecting the social cohesion and community peace".

conditions and suffocating population density compared to their small geographical area. Consequently, this may restrict the freedoms and well-being of individuals, which in return, leads to creating an environment perfect for the use of violence by certain individuals and groups. This is accompanied by low economic reality and high poverty rates. Data indicate that poverty is deepening in the Palestinian territories, where 36% of the Palestinian population lives below the poverty line while food insecurity percentage has increased from 9% to 23% in the West Bank.¹ Hence, levels of poverty in the camps are the worst levels in comparisons to other Palestinian localities. Data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) indicate that poverty is more prevalent in refugees' camps in Palestine. Thus, these camps suffer from low economic reality and high rates of unemployment among youth and those who are not in the education field, which contribute to a negative impact that can create an environment conducive to violence in its different forms and types.

In the same context, camps in the West Bank suffer from poor infrastructure and low levels of services provided. These challenges constitute an obstacle to meeting the population's basic needs such as health, education, social and cultural services, infrastructure and others. In addition, camps, in general, are considered one of the most marginalized areas and the population there suffers from high levels of unemployment, and low access to employment opportunities and public services compared to urban and rural residents.

¹ "Report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)", United Nations Trade and Development Organization (UNCTAD), 14 September 2022, on the below link: https://unctad.org/system/files/press-material/PR22013_ar_Palestine22.pdf.

Recently, the reality of the phenomenon of violence and internal conflicts were been highlighted, due to the occurrence of many incidents associated with insecurity, widespread use of weapons, and many internal disputes and problems. Some of which have led to killings, injuries, burning of homes and attacks on public property, and others have led to clashes with security forces in some camps during their attempt towards the resolution of internal conflicts. Although there is no clear data documenting the magnitude of this phenomenon, it is noted that these practices are associated with the absence of community peace and the situation of internal conflicts and disputes that have been recently arisen. This is despite that some sources indicate that violence percentages in Palestinian camps, in general, are similar to their counterparts in other regions, specifically in regards to killings. However, violence in Palestinian camps is likely to be highlighted intensively, reflecting this phenomenon more than in neighbouring areas.² Nevertheless, this does not deny the existence of many instances of violence, which make this phenomenon dangerous and affect the overall state of social peace.

Third: Reality of Social Violence in Balata Refugees Camp

Balata Refugees camp, established in 1950, is one of the largest camps in the West Bank in terms of the displaced population. It was established because of the Palestinian Nakba in 1948, with an area of 460 dunums, located southeast of Nablus City. The camp's inhabitants come from 60 villages of Lod, Yafa and Ramla regions, as well as many of the camp population are of Bedouin origin. According to the data of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) for 2022, the population of Balata Refugees camp is approximately 15,964 persons. However, the population was about

²Armed violence in the West Bank Camp, Factsheet, Palestinian Refugees Portal, 2021

14,614 persons; 7,228 males compared to 7,386 females in 2017³. According to UNRWA data, the number of camp's population classified as registered refugees is around 23,600 in 2022.⁴

According statements of interviewees, Balata camp, like many other Palestinian camps in the West Bank, is suffering, for many years now, from the spread of internal violence, especially the armed conflict represented in various forms of internal conflicts. Hence, forms of internal conflicts are such as fighting and disputes among families and different youth groups during which firearms or white weapons and sharp instruments are often used, according to the. This is in addition to many other practices such as assaulting public property, burning houses, cars, etc, where some disputes and conflicts have reached its peak, with some of them leading to killings causing the death of a number of citizens. According to periodic reports issued by the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), many killings during the period (2016 – 2020) have been recorded, as shown in the table below. However, no cases of homicide were reported in the last two years (2021–2022).

Table (1): Cases of Homicide at the Level of Balata Camp according to the data of ICHR during the period (2016 – 2020) ⁵

#	Victim Code	Age	Cause of Death	Date
.1	Citizen (H.A)	35 Years	Due to an injury of shrapnel lodge in his head	2020/10/31
.2	Citizen (E'.D)	56 Years	Due to a gunshot	2020/7/25
.3	Citizen (M.J)	20 Years	critical injuries in the neck by a blunt tool	2019/6/7

³Summary of Final Results of Census in Nablus Governorate, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2407.pdf>, with annual population increase estimates of 2.5%.

⁴UNRWA's Website on the following link: <https://cutt.ly/h3WhUGY>.

⁵ Reports of monthly violations of human rights and freedoms, Independent Commission for Human Rights, at the below link: <https://www.ichr.ps/reports/monthly-reports?page=1>.

.4	Citizen (A.E')	34 Years	Gunshots in the neck	2019/5/6
.5	Citizen (S.A)	23 Years	Due to a gunshot	2018/10/1
.6	Citizen (A.H)	28 Years	Due to critical injuries	2018/2/8
.7	Citizen (A.H)	25 Years	Died of his wounds during an armed clashing with Palestinian Security Forces	2018/2/1
.8	Citizen (M.Kh)	34 Years	Died of his wounds after being shot when he was in his car with his baby girl	2018/1/30
.9	Citizen (D.E')	24 Years	Gunshot wound to the abdomen	2016/9/28
.10	Citizen (E'.N)	30 Years	Gunshot wound to the abdomen	2016/8/9

In the

same

context, there have been 10 cases of killings among the larger families in the camp since 2009, which are now cold cases and have not yet been resolved⁶, according to Mr. Yahya al-Jammal, Director of the Department of Civil Peace and Tribes of Nablus Governorate. All respondents also agreed that, in recent years, family disputes have taken a greater share than other conflicts in Balata camp, which has been concentrated mainly among a number of large families, some of whom still have ongoing conflicts. This is despite all efforts being made to address such conflicts by reform committees and various parties at the camp level. In a sense, this indicates a weakness in the situation of community peace and an escalation in the level of violence at the camp level, which also reflects a clear problem in the social and educational culture, which is a public issue

⁶ An interview with Mr. Yahya Jammal, Director of the Department of Civil Peace and Tribes of Nablus Governorate and Head of Reform Committees on 21/2/2023

linked to social values. In addition, there are various causes fueling the phenomenon of violence, which is the product of a culture in which complex factors contribute to it and indicates a structural imbalance at the community level.

**Table (2): Homicide Cases that are still unsolved
at the level of Balata Camp during (2009–2021)**

Name of Victims	Number of Murders	Year of Incident
Ahmad Al-Asmar Remah Al-Madraswi	2	2009
Yasir Terawi	1	2015
Alaa Al-Najmeh	1	2016
Mohammad Khalil Osama Al-Assi Sabri Abu Mustafa	3	2018
Ibrahim Al-Assi Mousa Jabreel	2	2019
Mohmoud Marshoud	1	2021
Gran Total	10 cases	

Forth: Reasons and Forms of the Phenomenon of Social Violence in Balata Camp

The interpretation of the phenomenon of violence that it is a complex process because it is linked to a set of complex and interrelated social, cultural and political reasons that have to do with the nature of society's structure and the general context associated with the individual and society. A variety of reasons have been mentioned by representatives of community institutions and stakeholders in Balata camp in order to explain the causes of the phenomenon of violence occurring at the camp level, which is one of the biggest refugees camps in the West Bank. This is in addition to poor living conditions, overcrowding, high population density and a

limited camp area estimated at only 460 dunums compared to the population, as well as the poor reality of infrastructure, low public services, high levels of unemployment among the population and poor economic conditions in general. All of this is accompanied by a state of neglect towards the camp at the official level according to the statements of the majority of interviewed respondents. Moreover, the existence of different parties is likely to fuel conflicts among the population, particularly the Israeli occupation, in an attempt to distort the positive image and resilience in which Balata's camp was known for during the first Intifada.

Furthermore, the difficult economic situation in the camp and the existence of the high rate of poverty, which is one of the main causes of violence. Data indicate that unemployment rate

There reasons contributing to the phenomenon of internal violence at the Balata camp vary where the Israeli occupation is fueling violent behavior through a number of oppressive occupation policies and igniting internal sedition by supplying weapons used in internal conflicts.

This is accompanied by poor living conditions, economic reality, an increasing number of the camp's population suffering from poverty, unemployment, lack of rights, marginalization and low level of services, creating a fertile environment for widespread and increasing violence within the camp.

In addition, a high percentage of young people in the camp suffer from unemployment and lack of access to decent work. Knowingly, poverty and unemployment have profound negative impacts on the lives of individuals and youth in particular, as work is linked to quality of life and livelihoods indicators, where building a better life and future without finding decent work becomes more difficult and it has serious and disturbing effects on the social cohesion and the state of community peace.

among the population is high by 25%, according to the data of the UNRWA⁷. Although there are no sufficient data available, there are higher levels of unemployment among youth living in the camp, such as graduates, the unemployed or those who didn't receive any form of education. Hence, and in comparison, with the overall rate and indicators of unemployment at the national level, despite the fact that there is a high percentage of people enrolled in education according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). The number students enrolled in education is 4,100 in the camp; 1824 males and 2,276 females. Nonetheless, there are many holders of academic and scientific degrees in Balata camp, where there are 50 Ph.D. holders and, at least, 80 master's degree holders and hundreds of young persons with bachelor's degree as well as many competencies and specialists.⁸ In spite of this, a high percentage of youth in the camp suffer from lack of access to decent work and higher unemployment rates than in other region, as is known, poverty and unemployment have profound negative impacts on the lives of individuals and youth in particular. Hence, work is linked to quality of life and livelihoods indicators, where building a better life and future without finding decent work becomes more difficult and has serious and disturbing effects on the social cohesion and the state of community peace.

In addition, it was emphasized that one of the most significant causes of violence is disputes among families, particularly big ones, at the camp level. Those big families are about five families, the largest of which include (Al-Hashsheen, Jamasin, Terawi, Al-Sawalma "Thuqan", Al-Najmi). In addition, Israeli occupation plays a big role in the widespread of violence in the camp. It applies policies aimed at fueling the causes of conflicts and disagreements in the camp, as stated by the representatives of the local community. Large families, many of whom have had disputes and conflicts that have become continuous in the recent years inhabit the Balata camp. Therefore, the representatives of the local community agreed that the Israeli occupation provides illegal weapons through its known handlers (spies or arms dealers) to be widespread among some

⁷ A previously mentioned source via the following link: <https://cutt.ly/h3WhUGY>.

⁸ An individual interview with Mr. Jamal Al-Terawi, Chairman of Youth Club, on 21/1/2023

families or groups and parties. This may explain the reasons for the increasing prevalence of the weapons phenomenon in the camp, where the occupation takes advantage of the family's feuds and heavily promotes weapons. For example, in the case of citizen (H.R), it was noticed that unusual heavy weapons were used at the camp level, such as (missiles, bombs), indicating the fact that there is weapons supply aimed at creating a state of insecurity and eliminating the Palestinian security control. However, it was pointed out that a distinction should be made between the national weapon used to fight back and combat Israeli occupation and the use of weapons on occasion or at the time of disputes, which is usually used during disputes and conflicts between different parties and groups.

On the other hand, the other reasons that are associated with political influences and organizational conflicts cannot be excluded, as there are several political parties in the camp trying to attract youth and families to achieve their interests, which result in internal conflicts due to the imposition of power or control over the camp by some parties. Moreover, the majority of stakeholders pointed out that the role and behaviour of the Palestinian police and security services have, at times, been negative, which, in return, contributed in the deepening of many disputes between a number of families in the camp. They described their method of handling such issues as "the wrong way", where some security agencies and Palestinian security forces were biased with some of the differences that have occurred. This "wrong way" of dealing with some families feuds provide protection and support for some families over the others. which, according to many camp representatives, has contributed to increasing tensions and disagreements and renewed clashes again. In some cases, problems have evolved into violence and clashes against Palestinian security forces. In spite of this, the official version of the security services stated that they deal with the events objectively and if there are any cases of killings, they try to control of the situation and work to enforce their control on the ground to prevent friction between parties. Sometimes, security services are permanently present in the camp to ensure that disputes are resolved and that public property or families with disputes or conflicts amongst one another are not attacked. Nevertheless, all the parties interviewed agreed that the political factors associated with Israeli occupation and its role in fueling the factors of conflict and

internal violence and in stimulating internal seditions in the camp remained the most important reasons of violence in the camp.

Regarding the forms and nature of violence that usually occur inside Balata camp, there are many forms, the majority of which occur as a result of disagreements between large families. Such conflicts sometimes lead to killings, even for minor reasons, but they worsen to the point of murder. For example, the murder of the citizen (H, R) in 2019, which is one of the biggest disputes at the camp level. There have been conflicts between several families for revenge, where many members of these families and their supporters from other families participated in these acts of revenge. Hence, this has resulted in using multiple forms of violence, such as shootings, mutual clashes, burning houses and vehicles, and attacks on property belonging to the victim's families. This resulted in the killing of other members of the killer's family because of the act and the reaction. Thus, this indicates the danger of violence leading to killings and which, in return, usually leads to the long and expansion of conflicts and disputes and the difficulty of terminating them or addressing them for a very long period.

However, the form of violence practiced may often be simple and easily manageable due to individual personal disagreements or problems between young people as a result of practices, negative behaviours or events caused by daily friction as a result of housing, children's play or other reasons that may be attributable to parking, bullying, provocation, etc. Also, camp representatives pointed out that events and disputes that occur are usually controlled unless they reach the murder stage, so that legal personalities and community leaders such as (Reform Committees, political party, Institutions and Services Committees) in order to work to resolve these differences, control them and prevent them from expanding. For example, the murder of the citizen (A. M), where he was manslaughter. The Camp Reform Committee through tribal reconciliation dealt with this case and the murderer's family was obliged to pay ransom of an amount of JOD 100,000 and the two families made peace. In the event of intentional homicide, a truce shall be given for a period of (3) days (burial truce) and then the truce may be extended to (10) days. In such cases, public institution and security forces carry out interventions to arrest the perpetrators. Yet, if they are sometimes not arrested, things may escalate leading to a

situation of insecurity, loss of control and renewed clashes aimed at taking their own revenge through killing. This has previously happened to (Thuqan family and Sawalma family) 6 years ago, (Abu Shaheen family and Abu Assab family) 6 years ago, and (Shtewi family and the Jamaseen family) 4 years ago.

Fifth: The impact of violence on youth participation and their engagement in influencing the public context in the camp

Violence has negative impact on youth's participation, where youth are used as a fuel for violence against youth, who m fall victims because of this violence. At the level of Balata camp, the percentage of young people in the 15–29 age group is estimated to be 4,700 out of the total population. Nevertheless, representatives of stakeholders that were interviewed, including youth group, agreed that the youth group in the camp was experiencing a difficult social and economic reality, as unemployment rates are high among young people, especially graduates, as well as a high percentage of young people outside the education field. It is also noticed that statistical data and information are almost unavailable. But it is almost agreed that unemployment indicators are the worst at the level of Palestinian camps, where 41% of youth in the age group (18–29 years) are unemployed and not enrolled in education/training (young people who are not engaged in work or enrolled in education/training) in 2021 at the level of the West Bank level⁹.

Furthermore, majority of the stakeholders' representatives in the camp also indicated that youth participation was low and did not live up to the required level, despite of the existing of many youth groups involved in voluntary work and social and cultural activities carried out by the institutions and community centers in the camp. Nevertheless, there are increasing numbers of unemployed young people or with limited training and qualification opportunities, cultural and social activities and capacity development programs, as well as poor potential of community institutions and limited activities carried out by them. Thus, this will create an environment

⁹PCBS presents the reality of youth in the Palestinian Society on International Youth Day on 12/8/2022, via the following link: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/postar.aspx?lang=ar&ItemID=4295>.

conducive to attracting and exploiting young people to participate and practice different forms of violence that may occur. It is noticed that the majority of family disputes or conflicts related to factional parties usually start from the initiation of disputes between youth groups and then they extend and expand to other parts of families and parties at the level of Balata camp.

It is noticed that there are an increasing percentage of the youth group in the camp suffers from frustration, despair, poor interest in participation and low interest in community and voluntary work because of economic and living conditions, poor opportunities for qualification, training and development of various capacities and activities. The Chairwoman of the Women's Center stated that 'When a young person in the camp is unable to provide for his basic needs and to have a job or to look positively at his future, it generates negative energy and internal violence that leads them to take it the streets and start problems. Such individual could possibly be attracted by different parties to participate in conflicts and violence that occur in society'.¹⁰ The head of the camp's sports club points out that the amount of frustration and despair of youth in the camp is very great. This is due to the camp's difficult reality resulted from the Israeli occupation practices and the exposure of young people to repeated attacks either to killing, injury or arrest, in addition to the marginalization of young people at the formal level, especially those in the camps, which makes participation in the phenomenon of violence a natural refuge for many young people.¹¹

Furthermore, it may be noted out that the challenges faced by young people at the Balata camp level prompt some to participate in different forms of violence as fuel for insecurity by participating in armed groups or belonging to certain political currents fighting for power in the camp. There is also low level of awareness among some of young people, especially those who are not in education, which makes it easier to attract them to participate in conflict and violence. This is in addition to negative social and educational culture and weak law control that promotes values and concepts "Taking your right by your own hand" and spreading the culture of trespassing and the use of means and methods of threats. Experts in the field of behavioral and social psychology

¹⁰ An interview with Ms. Amal Terawi, Chairwoman of the Women's Center at Balata Camp on 21/1/2023

¹¹An interview with Mr. Jamal Terawi, Chairman of Youth Club in Balata Camp on 21/1/2023

suggest that violence aims to remove feelings "shame", "humiliation" or "contempt", and replacing such feeling with feelings of "pride" instead, since the spark of violence, especially among young people, threatens self-esteem. It is also noticed that young people are looking for status, often turning into violence as a way of showing off and enhancing their place and status among friends or in the surrounding environment, especially if young people are at the lower economic and social levels of society and live in an environment that promotes the values of violence and recognizes those who engage in such behavior. In particular, young people are still in the process of looking for themselves or trying to find and determine their identity, and that one method of self-proof or identity confirmation by some people is a practice of violence as a means of seeking attention and obtaining recognition¹². It is important to reflect on how to overcome the underlying causes of the feelings frustration young people are suffering, giving attention to reducing levels of inequality in society, and help young people to achieve their self-fulfillment and prove their status and place through constructive positive behaviors, rather than simply addressing the timely causes of violence in its various forms.

Sixth: Consequences of Violence on Youth and its Impact on Gender

Violence can have deep negative effects on young people regarding the psychosocial aspects and even affect the reality and future of youth in general. Although youth are being exploited to be a fuel and tool for violence, they are the most affected groups by the consequences of violence at the community level which may include physical damage as a result of injury, disability or even the losing their life "through murder", in addition to psychological and behavioral damage. Violence may also lead to the promotion of aggressive behaviors, violence practiced by youth and against them, isolation, social inclusion and separation from society.

At the level of Balata camp, there is no clear data on the impact of violence on female and male youth and girls in general; however, many young people have been injured or killed due to shootings or white weapons that resulted from fighting and internal disputes in the camp. Hence,

¹² Safwan Mabydeen "Social Violence, reasons and solutions" Dar AL-YAZORI for Publishing, published study on 17/2/2018.

11 murders have been reported since 2009, where the majority of those murder victims are young people. Moreover, the negative effects are usually extended to other risks likely to result in various threats of violence against citizens and the population and to threaten the state of community peace. In addition to the risks imposed by murders or injuries, the practice of violence has led to attacks on private property, burning many homes and vehicles, and even the displacement of entire families who have participated in the acts of killings.

The consequences and risks of violence on young people do not only affect or cause physical and psychological damage but they are also affect social and economic aspects. Youth focus group pointed out that there are many negative effects on young people of both sexes because of the widespread phenomenon of violence in Balata camp. They reported many forms of social discrimination against the camp residents that affect young people due to of the camp's bad reputation, stereotype and unjust media coverage, which leads to only reporting the heavy f news on disagreements and conflicts through media means and social media networks. Those aspects had negative consequences on young people in the camp in terms of access to employment opportunities and youth being discriminated against and excluded at the Nablus governorate level. Among such discrimination practices is refusing to employ any camp residents in any jobs once the employers know that the applicant is from Balata camp. Also, the refusal of some families to marry their sons or daughters to someone living in Balata camp and they even refuse to live in the camp or they set a condition to provide a home outside the camp. Youth group indicated that these practices were forms of discrimination, exclusion, marginalization and the stereotype of the camp, which lead to the deprivation of youth of their rights to access employment or various services and even affect the social reality of some girls who are deprived of marriage because of the camp's inferior view. In addition, many citizens are afraid to enter or visit the camp, where some practices have reached to a limit where some taxi/public drivers refuse to take people from the city of Nablus to or from the camp.

Seventh: Roles of Stakeholders and local institutions in mitigating Violence in the Camp

It is worth mentioning that addressing the reasons and consequences of violence is a complex process and requires all official and community efforts to be combined to address the prevalence of this phenomenon and try to reduce it. Nonetheless, many community institutions and community leaders in the camp try to play different roles to reduce the phenomenon of violence and work to protect community peace and address conflicts and disputes that may occur. Hence, stakeholders pointed out that the People's Committee for Local Services and local institutions in cooperation with reform committees and stakeholders are working on reducing the phenomenon of violence and conflicts that could arise at the level of Balata camp; throughout addressing the reasons, forms and factors that fuel violence in accordance with the capacities and capabilities of those institutions and parties that remain limited and do not live up to the desired level. For example, it was pointed out that the People's Committee and institutions put on efforts when any fight and conflicts arise and with the efforts of mediation between families or citizens. Thus, institutions and reform committee in the camp that includes (25 persons) in cooperation with the People's Committees and Nablus Governorate, work on addressing any problems that may arise and try to find solutions to the existing conflicts in the camp. This is done either by visiting the families of the parties of the conflict as part of the efforts to address disputes from the very beginning or by coordinating with the relevant security agencies to intervene through law enforcement and policing.

Furthermore, recent efforts include the agreement to establish a tribal committee in the camp, with the participation of the governorate, the People's Committee and social institutions, which was approved and adopted by Nablus Governorate this year 2023 to try finding solutions to murder cases that remain unsolved at the camp level. In addition, the Chairman of the of the Youth Community Club of Balata Camp stated that the Sports Club had started, six months ago, introducing the idea of an initiative aimed at promoting the state of community peace. Consequently, a social committee of representatives of institutions and stakeholders was formed to reach out with families who still have conflicts and killing cases to address and resolve them once and for all.

In the same context, social institutions in the camp include (People's Committee for Services, Youth Sports Center, Balata Youth Center, Yaffa Center, Local Committee for Persons with disabilities, Children's Club, Women's Center, etc.). Such social institutions are still providing services according to their objectives and scope of work in an effort to provide part of the necessary needs and services for the camp. In spite of modest possibilities and insufficient support of these institutions, they implement many programs and activities in social, cultural and charitable aspects targeting people of the camp, especially the youth of both sexes in the camp. Such activities and programs include the implementation of educational, awareness raising and sports and cultural activities to absorb young people's potential, as well as psychological debriefing and finding alternatives, which can positively contribute to reducing and mitigating the prevalence of violence in the camp. Despite the importance of the efforts made, representatives of various institutions have pointed out that their interventions are often limited and have poor impact rather than being a widespread impact in their attempt to reducing this phenomenon and reduce the violent behaviours that occur in Balata camp. Those efforts made do not have the necessary power to influence or impact, and they suffer from lack and limited available potential needed to provide programs and services to improve the camp's reality; because of limited funding opportunities and inadequate support from official parties for making interventions that would clearly help in reducing this phenomenon.

Eighth: Proposed Programs and Interventions to be implemented to reduce the Phenomenon of Violence

There are social programs that can positively affect the process of addressing and dealing with the phenomenon of violence at the Balata camp level or at least limit its spread. As have been mentioned earlier, there are several social institutions in the camp that seek working with youth of both sexes, activate their roles and increase their ability to influence the reality of the camp, through training, capacity development, creating economic empowerment opportunities and providing small and productive projects that can contribute to reducing unemployment, as well as

other interventions that can steer the potential of youth in the camp and ensure that they do not get involved in the different activities of social violence.

Moreover, representatives of stakeholders have pointed out several interventions such as implementing community initiatives and campaigns by youth to maintain the state of civil and community peace, as well as those initiatives aimed at improving the image of Balata camp through promoting community and cultural activities carried out in and by the camp and receiving delegations and youth groups from universities and from Nablus city to participate in community activities. This is in addition to organizing ceremonies to celebrate honor students or actors of good deeds, festivals and events among the participation of citizens, different groups and legal entities from outside the camp. Furthermore, creating and providing economic empowerment opportunities for youth in order to reduce unemployment among graduates and uneducated youth groups by providing training programs, development of professional vocational capacities and access to small projects. Such efforts include the participation of youth and their ability to influence the reality of the camp by establishing a framework representing them as a youth council of Balata camp. This, in a sense, can contribute to encouraging and motivating young people to implement various community activities and initiatives to raise awareness, psychological debriefing and develop capacities that are targeting young people and citizens of the camp. This is in addition to providing various facilities for the youth group such as sports stadiums and cultural facilities such as libraries and theatres, which can help in reducing the involvement of youth in behaviors of violence.

Furthermore, the main issues and challenges related to the phenomenon of social violence in Balata camp are highlighted in the below table. Also, the most important interventions responsive to the needs of this group are marked in the below table as well, which will clarify the most important intervention strategies that can be implemented at all levels by stakeholders from official bodies, community institutions and representatives of stakeholders at the level of Balata camp.

Table (3): The framework of proposed interventions – highlights the most prominent issues, main challenge and proposed programs

#	Main Issue	Main Challenges	Proposed Interventions	Partners and stakeholders
.1	Poor prevention, protection and response mechanisms for violence and threats to community peace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Limited interventions on internal violence risk prevention ❖ Negative social culture and limited social awareness towards violent behaviors ❖ The poor role Law Enforcement and Justice forces are playing ❖ Participation and involvement of some relevant stakeholders as young people in internal violence practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Implementing comprehensive and integrated awareness raising campaigns that focus on the prevention to raise the social awareness on the risks of social violence ❖ Targeting and focusing on families and households that are still in unsolved conflicts, and giving attention to families most vulnerable to being involved in violence ❖ Activating the role of the Social Reform Committee and forming local networks to provide protection against violence. ❖ Discussing, on the round table, the measures and procedures for intervening in time of crises and violence ❖ Developing specific mechanism and procedures to observe and document violations of violence that occur at the level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Security forces and law enforcement agencies ○ People’s Committee for Services and social institutions ○ National institutions that provides counselling service a psychological support ○ Representative of big families in the camp

#	Main Issue	Main Challenges	Proposed Interventions	Partners and stakeholders
			<p>of Balata camp and their consequences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Providing healthcare services and psychological rehabilitation for victims of violence families, especially murder cases 	
.2	<p>Poor roles of institutions and limited participation of youth in efforts made to combat violence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Weak role of social institutions in working on interventions to face the phenomenon of social violence ❖ Lack of clear interventions of social institutions such as measures to mitigate violence ❖ Youth's weak participation in the efforts made in response to violence and maintaining the community peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Preparation an inter-institutional intervention plan in the camp that includes the implementation of social, cultural, entertainment and sports programs, interventions and activities aimed at attracting young people and increasing their involvement in voluntary and community work ❖ Organizing "Code of Honor" campaign that is implemented by the youth and in cooperation with local institutions through which representatives of families, community leaders, local institutions and stakeholders sign an honor document to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People's Committee for Services ○ Social institutions in the camp ○ Representative of big families in the camp ○ Youth groups.

#	Main Issue	Main Challenges	Proposed Interventions	Partners and stakeholders
			<p>commit to the protection of community peace and the prevention of violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establishing a youth council at the camp level can contribute in enhancing youth participation and implementing several community initiatives and activities ❖ Implementing community and voluntary initiatives and activities aimed at strengthening the role of youth and their contribution in influencing the reality of the camp and creating social change through integrated voluntary campaigns and initiatives 	
.3	Reduce the effects of the negative stereotype spread on Balata Refugee Camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Negative media coverage on Balata camp ❖ The focus of social media networks is given on the negative news on the camp ❖ Limited coverage of social and cultural programs and activities carried out at the camp level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Holding a workshop “the round table” with institutions in camp and various media means and journalists to address the ethics of media coverage on the camp. (Signing the Code of Media Honor) ❖ Organizing a ceremony for honoring the best media person and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People’s Committee for Services ○ Social institutions in the camp ○ Youth groups.

#	Main Issue	Main Challenges	Proposed Interventions	Partners and stakeholders
		❖ Poor communication between camp representatives and the local community in Nablus City	<p>media sites across the governorate (to be hold in Balata camp)</p> <p>❖ Organizing a ceremony for honoring the best social media influencers across the governorate (to be hold in Balata camp)</p> <p>❖ Forming a team of volunteers of youth and university media graduates to participate in covering the news and activities carried out in Balata camp.</p> <p>❖ Coordinating to invite students from Al-Najah University and youth delegations to participate in social and sports activities carried out in Balata camp.</p>	<p>○ Media means and media persons in Nablus City</p> <p>○ Media graduates and students and those interested in social communication</p>

Annexes and Attachments

- Annex (1): List of focus group information with youth
- Annex (2): Summary of the list of individual interviews with stakeholders in Balata Camp

Annexes

Annex (1): List of focus group information with youth

Meeting	No. of meetings	No. of Attendants	Date of the Meeting
Focus meetings with youth	1	13	2023/2/1

Annex (2): Summary of the list of individual interviews with stakeholders in Balata Camp

Institution	Name and Title	Date of the Meeting
Yafa Center	Tayseer Nasr Allah: Member of the Revolution Council of Fateh and the Chairman of Yafa Center	2023\1\21
Women's Forum	Amal Terawi: Chairwoman of Women's Forum	2023\1\21
Balata Youth Club	Jamal Al-Terawi: Chairman of Balata Youth Club	2023\1\21
Local Association for Social Rehabilitation	Khalid Awad: Chairman of the Local Association for Social Rehabilitation and a member of Fateh Organization	2023\1\24

People's Committee for Services	Ahmad Thuqat, Issam Al- Ka'beh, Raed Al-Terawi: Members of the Committee	2023\1\24
People's Committee for Services	Emad Zaki AL-Terawi: Chairman of People's Committee for Services	2023\1\29
Department of Refugees Affairs	Nisreen Thuqan: Director of the Northern Camps in the West Bank in the Department of Refugees Affairs	2023\1\29
Nablus Governorate	Director of the Department of Civil Peace in Nablus Governorate and Head of Reform Committees in Balata Camp	2023\2\21