## Covid-19 pandemic may lead to doubling of poverty rates in Palestine

Covid-19 played a fundamental role in exacerbating the plight of more than 45% of Palestinian workers, as indicated by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in its report that presented indicators on the status of the labor market and establishments in Palestine. *What is worth noting is that Palestinian workers have been denied their basic labor rights in many ways long before the spread of the pandemic, whether in the Palestinian or Israeli Labor Markets.* In June 2020, the World Bank warned that poverty rates in the occupied West Bank might double due to the economic fallout caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It also said that the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority is "expected to be increasingly difficult" due to a loss of income and increased spending on healthcare and other areas. Before the pandemic, more than a quarter of Palestinians lived in poverty, and the pandemic may lead to an increase of poverty rates to 30% in the occupied West Bank and 64% in the Gaza Strip, as stated by the World Bank.

**According to the report on "the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and Containment Measures on Palestinian Women Workers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip", prepared by DWRC, 29.2% of surveyed female workers stopped working completely and were not paid their wages at all**

The Democracy and Workers' Rights Center launched a survey on "The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Working Women in Palestine" to assess the impact of this crisis on working women in Palestine, how their needs were dealt with during the State of Emergency, and whether these needs were met. The survey was filled by 332 Palestinian women workers in June 2020, working in public & private sectors.

The findings indicated that many female workers in various economic sectors did not obtain their wages during the first months of the State of Emergency. A significant number of employers in the private sector did not abide with the tripartite agreement to provide 50% of workers' wages during March & April 2020. The highest rate of surveyed women (29.2%) indicated that they stopped working completely and did not receive their wages, while the lowest percentage of the surveyed women (10.2%) said that they stopped working, but obtained their full wages.

Women workers are among the groups most affected by the pandemic, as it has exacerbated pre-existing violations of labor rights and unpaid care burdens. 48.2% of survey participants indicated that the load of housework/child care increased, while they received no assistance from anyone, or their husband helped less than before. As the State of Emergency and pandemic are ongoing, it is highly likely that financial and family burdens will increase further. 75.3% of the respondents indicated that they contribute in supporting their families, whereas 24.7% indicated that they are the sole providers for their families. Over half stated that they need assistance, with 31.6% who registered to receive support, but did not receive any as of the end of June.

***Click here*** **to read the report and to know more about violations of working women's rights during this crisis.**

Democracy & Workers' Rights Center-Palestine
مركز الديمقراطية وحقوق العاملين -فلسطين
WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

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## Female youth face discrimination in accessing study programs in four higher education institutions in the Gaza Strip

Although women and girls face many hardships and gender-based discrimination in Palestine, education is an area where girls repeatedly distinguish themselves. In 2020, there were 28 girls among the 34 top students that obtained the highest grades in various sections of the secondary school exam. Having good grades at this exam is extremely important, as it determines Palestinian students' access to universities and colleges, and the possibility to pursue their chosen career paths. It should be a given that girls and boys have equal access to higher education studies. *Yet in 2020, three Gaza universities have set higher grades thresholds for girls than boys for acceptance in a number of fields of study, and one offers numerous study programs for an intermediate diploma or a vocational diploma for male youth only.* Higher education institutions should respect and fulfill the right to equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Palestinian basic law and international human rights conventions. Fostering greater access of young women to more varied fields of study, particularly vocational and scientific/technological fields, has been a part of public policies for many years. It is high time that all higher education institutions comply with these policies. ***Please click here for more information.***

**On the occasion of the International Youth Day:** 38% of the Palestinian Youth were unemployed in 2019

On 12/08/2020, *the International Youth Day*, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reviewed the situation of Palestinian youth aged (18-29 years). In its press release, PCBS indicated that 38% of youth were unemployed in 2019, while the percentage of unemployed young women was much higher, reaching 63%. Data also showed that the highest unemployment rate among youth was for holders of intermediate diploma and higher, for whom it reached 52%.

Statistics indicated that 37% of youth are working in the informal sector, while over half are in informal employment (59%), i.e. informal sector workers & wage employees, who do not obtain any of their labor rights such as end of service indemnities, paid annual and sick leaves. Furthermore, one third of youth wage workers in the private sector obtain less than the minimum wage.

## 40 inspectors from the Gaza Strip trained on occupational safety and health and managing hazardous materials and chemical reactions

*Between 16-19/08/2020, and in cooperation with the labor inspection department at the Ministry of Labor and the general administration of Civil Defense,* the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center contributed in building the capacities of 40 inspectors from the Labor Ministry, Civil Defense, Municipalities and the Ministry of Health, on occupational health and safety, and mechanisms to deal with hazardous materials and chemical reactions.