



# Kayan Feminist Organization

2016 Annual Report: A Year in Review



**Greetings from Kayan.** We are pleased to present you with our 2016 annual report in which we provide an overview of organizational developments, and the challenges and successes we have met in our work. Overall, the 2016 year was defined by expansion in terms of the scope and diversity of our target groups and audiences, and in terms of new degrees of leadership realized and achieved by grassroots women activists in the field. These expansions are a result of progressions in our ongoing work in women's empowerment, community organizing, awareness-raising, and advocacy for Palestinian women's rights in Israel. In 2016 Kayan cooperated with and reached more youth, schools, social institutions, men and other NGOs than in any other year to date. Actions targeting these groups included lectures, workshops, joint-activities, advocacy meetings and more. Additionally, a substantial portion of these activities were led by grassroots activists from the field, who took leading roles in activity planning and implementation. These changing dynamics related to women's leadership is a firm indicator that our work for gender-equality is taking hold in the field, and that perceptions about women are changing at both collective and individual levels. Though we continue to face systematic

challenges related to patriarchal and State discrimination, both Kayan's staff and the Kayan grassroots network of over 200 Palestinian women activists are optimistic and motivated by the successes we have achieved, and are using challenges and obstacles as opportunities for learning, for strategizing, and for becoming even more vocal and visible in our activism. In each of the sections below we will provide a general overview of our work in 2016, as divided by projects and activities. We hope that you enjoy the read, and invite you to contact us with questions or for more information.

Thank you,

The Kayan Team

# Arab Women in Local Politics Project



As a continuation of our work in women's leadership and participation in the public sphere, this year Kayan initiated a project that directly targets the political sphere, and aims to integrate Palestinian women into local political bodies as both activists and elected officials. Our work took place and continues to take place on parallel and mutually re-enforcing levels, and already we have targeted and reached grassroots Arab women, the Arab civil society, and Arab politicians in the project.

Our work in 2016 included a pilot political empowerment training for one local group that has committed to supporting group members run for office in the 2018 local council elections, developing local social campaigns, publishing awareness-raising materials, and building the political capacities of Jusur Forum members through intensive workshops, trainings, and field activities.

The involvement of the Jusur Forum, which is Kayan's national body of 40 Arab women leaders representing local women's groups in 20 localities has played a pivotal role in developing the project model, and in 2016 put intensive efforts into developing as political leaders and strategizing methodologies and action plans for supporting Palestinian women's candidacies in the 2018 local council elections. These will be long term action plans, as there is an enormous amount of awareness-raising

**Pilot Political Leadership Training:** The pilot political leadership training in was held for a women's group in the city of Arrabeh. The women of this group are all committed to becoming political activists and/or running for political office in the 2018 local council elections. Thus, the workshop was tailored to provide the women participants with a space in which to gain in depth knowledge on the Israeli political system (including structures, financial systems, responsibilities, and regulations), key issues in Israeli politics and in Israeli democracy, campaigning strategies and political activism strategies, and more. From this pilot workshop we learned that while knowledge acquisition is an essential first step towards becoming political activists, creating space for the development of individual and group political opinions and political identities is of equal importance. Additionally, from the workshop the Kayan staff came to see the imperative need for personal and group political empowerment activities in the workshop. We are seeing a reoccurring sentiment amongst grassroots women activists, which is the feeling of being under-qualified for political office. This sentiment is largely gender-based, as male politicians with equal or lesser education levels, and less experience currently hold office. Thus, Kayan has integrated activities that empower women to acknowledge their own power and abilities into the political workshop. Looking forward

**Pilot Gender-Inclusivity Workshop for the Local Council:** Along with our pilot political empowerment training in Arrabeh, we also held our first pilot gender-inclusivity workshop for the Arrabeh local council. The workshop was attended by women from the Arrabeh group, the Mayor, heads of local council departments, and local council members. During the workshop, women activists from the Arrabeh group, Kayan's staff, and local politicians discussed the local council's commitment towards integrating women's needs on their agenda, and including women on party lists and in key local council positions. Overall, the discussion was enriching, and the political decision-makers were responsive to our suggestions and recommendations for gender-mainstreaming and gender-inclusivity. However, as our past work has showed us, such discussions are never enough. The real work towards gender-mainstreaming requires ongoing actions, ongoing follow up, and deep partnership building. Thus, in 2017 we will build on this first successful and cooperative meeting, and continue promoting direct communication and actions between the local council, local politicians, and the local women political activists in our program.

**Local Campaigns For Social Change:** The social campaign element of this project is a unique and new approach in our work. The social campaigns aim to build the leadership and community organizing capacities of grassroots women activists, develop working relationships with local decision-makers, and create networks of support. At this preliminary stage in the project, these campaigns are the foundation on which the women will grow as political activists, and will provide the women with experiences and lessons that will serve them in their local council campaigning and political work. So far the campaigns include the restoration and revitalization of a community garden in Shfa'amr, a campaign to create new women's groups in Isofiyah, and a project to spread healthy living practices and hold the first ever women-led marathon in Arrabeh. These social campaigns were developed during a capacity building training series with Ahel, an organization from Jordan that specializes in designing campaigns for social change and activism. The training was attended by Kayan's staff, Jusur Forum members, and local group representatives. To learn more about Ahel's work, please visit their [website](#).

### **Awareness-Raising and Access to Knowledge:**

A final element in this year's work on women in politics was the creation and dissemination of two key awareness-raising items, a brochure detailing Israeli local political systems and statistics on Arab women's representation in politics, and a video featuring on street interviews in which residents of Arrabeh were asked to give their opinions on women in politics. These items have different functions, with the video being used to spark discussions and debates, and the brochure being used as a teaching tool. Already the video has received wide-spread feedback, and with over 8,500 views, it is the most watched Kayan video to date. Discussions on the video have mostly revolved around the fact that most interviewees, women and men alike, gave affirmative statements on women entering the political sphere. However, in the comments section many wrote that the statements are only statements, and that when the elections arrive those that speak in support of women candidates will still cast their vote for men. As an organization we too have this impression, and thus in 2017 will intensify our work on community outreach, and in intensifying the visibility of Palestinian women's activism in the public sphere and in the media. Our video with English subtitles can be viewed on Kayan's facebook [here](#).

**“There is an urgent need for a new kind of leadership, and I strongly believe that women like me and many others who are supported by Kayan Organization and guided by its principles will be able to serve the interests of women through political representation.” –Wafiyeh, Women in Politics Project Participant**



# Enlivening the Return Movement Through Women's Leadership: *Politicizing Grassroots Arab Women As*

2016 has been a foundational year for the “Enlivening The Return Movement Through Grassroots Women’s Activism” project. For this project Kayan has partnered with ADRID (the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced), in order to bring together Kayan’s expertise in women’s empowerment and community organizing with ADRID’s in-depth knowledge on Return and land based activism. Together, Kayan and ADRID are empowering Palestinian women to become leaders in Right of Return and land based activism, and to ensure the inclusion of women’s needs and voices in these important movements for social justice. In 2016 we created the essential structure of the project, which thus far includes 5 women’s groups from different villages, and a regional steering committee. All groups include women who are themselves IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) within Israel. These women brought unique insights to their groups, as they were able to share their experiences and their families’ experiences with displacement.

**“When my knowledge expanded, so did my motivation to act, and this project has given me the path to become an activist.” Bouthaina, Project Participant**

**Trainings and Workshops:** Four of the women’s groups have gone through full Return activism and Women’s empowerment trainings, in which they gained an in depth knowledge on issues related to land, housing, and displacement, as well as practical skills and tools for working on these issues through social activism. Project participants also developed ongoing partnerships with guest speakers such as the activists from Prawer Won’t Pass and Professor Yosef Jabareen from the Technion. Project participants are maintaining these partnerships, and in 2017 look forward to holding joint activities with these partners. Looking to the future, these groups will work together and individually on implementing activities aimed at bringing their communities together in order to learn about the Nakba, and current land and housing based issues affecting their villages and the Palestinian society at large. These public activities will include but are not limited to: women-guided tours of destroyed Palestinian villages, film screenings, lectures, creative youth workshops, family history projects for youth, and more.

**Capacity Building Amongst Partners:** Whenever Kayan partners with another NGO we aim to facilitate gender-mainstreaming, and bring our knowledge and experiences to enhance the partnership. In this project ADRID has been incredibly motivated to use Kayan as a resource in gender-mainstreaming their own organizational practices, and even invited Kayan to give a workshop on this topic to their staff and board. Since this workshop, ADRID has reported that three new women board members were elected, and in all of their planning and activity implementation there has been an increase in women’s leadership.



# Ending Violence Against Women and Femicide From a Holistic Perspective

Kayan's work on ending violence against women addresses a serious need in the Palestinian society in Israel, in which the murder rates of women are rising year to year. While Kayan looks at violence holistically, and addresses many forms of violence (including economic, political, emotional, and sexual violence), due to pressing needs we have put a strong emphasis on the murder of women and physical violence. Much of our work on this issue was within the rubric of a joint project with Baladna Association for Palestinian Youth, in which we empowered and mobilized women and youth to be public leaders in the movement to end violence against women. Through this project, the Jusur Forum, and local women's groups each integrated ending violence against women into their national and local group agendas, and work throughout the year on this issue.



**Ending Violence Against Women Conference:** During 2016 a project steering committee comprised of grassroots women who were intensively trained on the issue of violence against women, the Jusur Forum, and project youth participants organized and implemented a national conference that was attended by over 200 people. The conference addressed the topic of violence against women using creative and varied strategies and methods. The women created professional-quality dramatic performances in which they read aloud the stories of actual women who were murdered. Furthermore, the conference featured panel discussions with political leaders and media representatives. Following the conference and media panel discussion, Kayan was invited to give a workshop for Palestinian journalists on how to take a feminist approach in writing about violence against women. Kayan used this opportunity to facilitate in depth discussions on women's representation in the media, and the use of media in promoting and breaking gender-based stereotypes.

**16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women Campaign:** This year, Kayan also worked intensively with the Jusur Forum and local groups to hold our annual 16 Days of Activism To End Violence Against Women campaign to advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence against women.

From November 25<sup>th</sup> to December 10<sup>th</sup>, Kayan participated for its second year in this international event in solidarity with thousands of other women around the globe. This event included daily workshops, film screenings, lectures, theater productions, and discussions amongst women throughout the Northern Triangle region. One notable event was a performance by a Druze woman about her experience as a survivor of domestic abuse. The performance was given to over 70 women in her community of Isofiya. There were also four workshops on sexual violence for secondary school students which were held at a school in Deir Hanna, and a 70-person demonstration in Shaf' Amer including men, youth, and women to raise awareness of sexual violence. Altogether, Kayan and Jusur held over 19 activities throughout the week to empower and educate women in 6 villages. These activities were directly attended by over 1,000 women, men, and youth.



**Lectures and Workshops:** Lastly, throughout the year Kayan held ongoing lectures and workshops on the topic of violence against women. These activities reached over 1,000 women, youth, and men. Increasingly, Kayan is being invited to give workshops to schools, which we deem critical, as youth need to be exposed to pro-woman and anti-violence discourse. The decision of schools to invite Kayan to hold such workshops represents a wider shift in discourse within the Palestinian society. Before only a few years, school workshops were almost entirely off limits to our organization, as schools were reluctant and dismissive of inviting a feminist organization in to work with youth. However, due to ongoing women's rights work, increasingly the Arab society is recognizing the urgency and need for feminist discourse and knowledge in order to ensure the security of women.



## Sustainable Leadership for Women's Health

Kayan has developed a unique, holistic approach to promoting Palestinian women's health rights and status based on the belief that grassroots women have the ability to be leaders and activists in the field of women's and community health. 2016 marked the fifth year of our health project, which has developed to include 102 grassroots Palestinian women participants from 9 villages. Project activities have included empowering grassroots women activists to lead the following activities: training local women's groups on health from a holistic perspective, mapping local women's health needs and health resources, holding local parlor meetings, developing and implementing needs responsive action plans, and building cooperative partnerships with local health professionals and decision-makers.

From the health project, we are seeing the power of grassroots women to change their personal lives, the lives of their family members, and their communities. In our project evaluation, participants reported that they have made positive changes in their diet, go for more medical check-ups, have changed the diets of their families, participate in exercise programs, introduced a nutritional food programs to a daycare center, develop health-based workshops and public activities for their community members, go for medical checkups, and have successfully put health on the social agenda of their communities. In total, during the 2016 year, women's groups enrolled in the project coordinated and implemented close to 100 public activities that reached nearly 500 people. These activities included: lectures and workshops on critical issues facing Palestinian women (e.g. breast cancer, diabetes, nutrition, exercise, mental health, environmental health, blood sugar and more), public health days, exercise programs, the creation of local walking paths, indigenous medicinal plant workshops, and more.



**Local Health Committees:** In four villages (Jdaydi il Maker, Majd il Krum, Dier Hanna, and Yafit il Nasre), women’s groups have developed LHCs (local health committees) comprised of health professionals, local council members, local decision-makers, representatives from the Ministry of Health, and representatives from health insurance agencies. These LHCs work with the women’s groups in order to provide professional input and support to their work. LHC members have given women access to local resources and spaces for their activities, have provided lectures and workshops, and have helped the women to connect with other health institutions and professionals in order to receive health-based services.

**Social Change Agents:** Another key development in the health project was the training of 6 women agents of social change. These women came from existing groups engaged in the project, and were intensively trained to bring the health project to new villages. From the social change agents’ work, the health project has now expanded to 7 women’s groups in 6 new villages where the agents are leading new groups in developing professional health-based partnerships, mapping the health needs of local women, and designing needs responsive activities for women in their villages. This was a major organizational achievement, as we are aiming to see grassroots women activists in the field develop as leaders and take stronger roles in implementing projects and activities. This type of leadership is essential to the sustainability of our women’s movement, and provides women activists with valuable experiences that translate into increased empowerment and skills that can be applied in all spheres of life.

**“ Since engaging in the health project, I am managing to live a healthier lifestyle in my day to day existence- in my house, with my family, and I am even promoting healthier lifestyles for my coworkers. I also managed to initiate a change in the local administration in my village by putting community health on the local council’s public agenda.” Bouthaina, Health Project Participant**



## ***The Jusur Forum: Kayan’s Unique Model for Grassroots Movement Building***

Kayan’s key model for grassroots organizing is Jusur, a local and national network of grassroots Palestinian women leaders. On the local level, Jusur is comprised of 20 local women’s groups who have gone through intensive empowerment and leadership trainings with Kayan, and now work with Kayan’s staff on developing and implementing projects that respond to the real needs of grassroots Palestinian women. Representatives of each of these local groups make up the Jusur Forum, a body that brings Palestinian women’s activism and leadership to a national level. The Jusur Forum not only initiates their own activist initiatives, but also are included in Kayan’s board, and are part of major organizational decision-making processes. As of now, the Jusur Forum and Jusur local groups are leading projects related to women’s health rights, women’s participation in local politics and decision-making processes, ending violence against women and women killing, and land and housing rights. The themes of local group work are a product of local needs assessments, in which local groups invite women from their village to parlor meetings. During these meetings, the group members lead group discussions in which local women, usually for the first time in their lives, are asked about their biggest concerns. From these needs assessments, the local groups decide upon major issues to work on. Kayan’s community projects each relate to the most common concerns brought up in these meetings (i.e. violence against women, women’s health rights, and land and housing rights), and to the goals and aspirations of local women (i.e. women in local politics). By developing projects in response to the needs in the field, we ensure that grassroots women’s voices lead our work. The Jusur Forum largely works to leverage local initiatives by coordinating local efforts, and engaging in national awareness-raising and advocacy.

Kayan held four major Jusur meetings this year. Each of these meetings included updates and analyses of all current Kayan projects, as well as workshops oriented towards enhancing the Jusur activism. In 2016, these workshops were oriented around women in politics, which, in addition to ending violence against women, has become a focal topic of the Forum. Below please find a short description of each of the 2016 Jusur forum meetings.

## Touran Meeting: February 2016

### **Agenda:**

- Overview of all Kayan Projects
- Sexual Harassment Prevention Workshop
- Strategic Planning Session for 2016 Conference on Ending Violence Against Women
- Strategic Planning for Women in Politics Project: Including an overview of the project model with an analysis and discussion.

**Highlights:** A highlight of the meeting included the sexual harassment workshop in which Jusur members gained capacities for breaking open the taboo of speaking about sexual harassment by sparking discussions. In the post-workshop discussions members posited that they will use the skills they gained in the workshop to begin speaking about sexual harassment with their families, their communities, and in their workplaces.



## Shfa'amr Meeting: May 2016

### **Agenda:**

- Evaluation of the Ending Violence Against Women Conference
- Power from Feminist Perspectives Political Leadership Workshop
- Lecture and Workshop on the Status of Palestinian Political Prisoners' Wives and Systematic and Cultural Discrimination

**Highlights:** In evaluating the conference, Jusur members felt that the participation of women in the conference was very strong, and that the women's performances during the conference evoked emotional responses from the audience, and brought the issue to life. However, the Jusur members also discussed their frustration with Arab male political decision makers. Two such decision-makers cancelled their participation in discussion panels on the day of the conference, and male participants on both the political panel and media panel were entirely unwilling to take acknowledge their responsibility and role in ending violence against women, and instead made attacks on feminist organizations and activists, claiming that these actors are not doing enough work.



For the members of Jusur, who work intensively on ending gender-based violence, these statements from male political decision-makers fueled their motivation for entering the political sphere. The Jusur activists stated that they "woke up" to the reality, and saw that the current political leadership entirely disregards even the most basic needs and rights of women. This realization led into a workshop on the topic of *power from feminist perspectives*. During the workshop each Jusur member was first invited to reflect on her own definition of power. Following this time of personal reflection, the activists were invited to rotate through four different stations, with each station delving into a different aspect of power. The first station analyzed the similarities and differences in the women's

# Jenin Two-Day Meeting: September 2016

## **Agenda:**

- Women in Politics Creative Activity: Envisioning the future with and without women in local politics
- Women in Politics Project Updates and Analysis
- Group Dialogue on Identifying Personal and Shared Political Values
- “Players Mapping” to identify political stakeholders who share the forum’s values, who oppose the forum’s values, potential competitors, and potential partners.
- Lecture by Abed Anebtawi, the secretary of the local councils in Israel. Mr. Anebtawi gave a presentation on the situation of women in local councils and an analysis of women’s participation in politics within Israel.

**“These two days were very important and interesting, there was a lot of intensive discussion and knowledge gained. The expectations that we have for the Forum and for ourselves have become much higher, and now I am thinking about how I can take the knowledge gained in these two day and translate it into work for my local women’s group. I still need to process a lot in my head, and I feel a large sense of responsibility, but I have the power and passion to do this work.” - Samira, Forum Member**

**Highlights:** The first session of the meeting began with a drama activity that was intended to get Jusur members to creatively envision their feelings and thoughts about women in politics. In the activity there were two chairs, one representing heaven and one representing hell. While sitting in the heaven chair each woman was prompted to envision what a world in which there are women in local councils, and in the hell chair each forum member envisioned the opposite scenario. General themes for the heaven chair included: a more responsive local council, a local council that cares for the needs of the people more than for personal power, and a local council that is welcoming to the community. The general theme of the hell chair was disappointed, a stagnation in social development, and an irresponsive local council.

To further Jusur’s political strategy, the forum created a “players map.” The activity entailed identifying key stakeholders who share Forum values, key oppositional stakeholders, and potential competition. One realization from this process was that potential competitors may share the same values as the women, and thus there is a possibility to turn competitors into partners.

## Haifa Meeting: December 2016

### **Agenda:**

- Evaluating the 16 days of activism campaign
- Creating full 2017 work plan for women in politics

**Highlights:** In reflecting on the 16 days of activism campaign, members expressed that this year the campaign reflected their enhanced confidence and capacities in working to end violence against women. The campaign activities each included challenging debates and discussions, a strong presence of women, men, youth, and political decision-makers, and were given significant attention by the media and society at large. The success of the campaign was vital for this stage of our work, as each year the murder rates of Arab women fail to fall, which can be disheartening and frustrating for activists.

In the planning for future Forum work on women in politics, through strategy based discussions Forum members decided that the best way to leverage local women’s political candidacies will be through awareness-raising in the media. This awareness raising work will seek to change stereotypes about women in politics, increase the representation of politicalized Arab women activists in the media, and give direct support to women candidates. With their goals defined, Forum members went on to brainstorm exactly what skills, knowledge, and partners they will need in order to better design and proceed with their media work plan. As an initial step, the Forum members decided to plan a workshop with a professional media consultant in order to learn media work strategies. This Workshop is now planned for early 2017.



# Free Legal Hotline for Palestinian Women in Israel

In 2016 Kayan's lawyers provided free legal consultations and aid to close to **100** Palestinian women in Israel. Palestinian women approach Kayan's legal department for legal aid in the fields of personal status, employment rights, and sexual harassment in the workplace. Kayan's legal aid is free for Palestinian women who suffer from economic and social inequality, is in the Arabic language, and is staffed by feminist lawyers who understand the real threats and challenges that Arab women face. Our legal work takes a feminist approach, supporting our clients in making their own informed decision as related to legal action after analyzing and discussing options and potential consequences. In 2016, one client who worked with our lawyers to resolve an issue of sexual harassment told a Kayan lawyer, **“I called Kayan because I know I can trust you, you are for the women, and you will look out for my well-being.”** To develop this degree of trust, especially in relation to a subject as taboo as sexual harassment, has been a long process, and is a direct reflection of the feminist values that we bring to our legal work and our work in the community. As we continue to be an outspoken advocate for women's rights, women in the society come to trust Kayan as they see that we are not afraid to vocally pursue justice within a system that regularly silences women

## Awareness-Raising and Education on Women's Personal Status Rights

Arab Women's personal status rights are under threat by highly patriarchal religious courts that govern procedures related to Personal status, and by an overall lack of social awareness of women's rights as related to personal status. Each year Kayan hold lectures and workshops on burning issues related to personal status and on personal status rights, in order to put this issue on the public agenda, and to ensure that women are aware of their rights, entitlements, and the availability of feminist lawyers who are experts at working within the religious courtrooms. Additionally, Kayan uses social media to publish ongoing articles, campaigns, and information related to personal status rights. Through this work we keep the issue on the social agenda, ensure that women are updated to changes in laws and procedures, and break open social taboos on issues related to religious courts, domestic abuse, and more.

Awareness raising activities included 9 public lectures and workshops for 250 Palestinian women, such as a Personal Status lecture for 50 women in Acre, a lecture on the relationship between economic violence and personal status for 15 women in Salem Zalafe, and a lecture on violence against women and its connection to personal status for 80 women in Majd il Krum. There was also a lecture on personal status for law students which was attended by 50 men and women and led to two

students requesting to volunteer at Kayan. Through these lectures we ensure that women know their rights, and put major issues related to personal status on the social agenda. Additionally, one of the goals of these lectures is to build systems of support for women who are facing challenges related to personal status, particularly due to the fact that these women are often stigmatized by their communities, particularly when going through procedures related to divorce and/or domestic abuse. Thus, women who come to our lectures gain a feminist understanding of personal status, and come to be advocates and supporters of women's rights in their own circles.



# Meeting Feminist Activists From Gaza To Discuss Personal Status Discrimination

This year Kayan organized a special staff capacity building event in which feminist activists from Gaza came and visited Kayan's offices for a joint meeting with Kayan and Al-Siwar-Arab Feminist Movement in Support of Victims of Sexual Abuse. During the meeting activists discussed shared challenges, strategies, experiences, and lessons learned in working on women's personal status rights, particular in the context of religious court systems and within patriarchal societies. One realization from the meeting, was that despite living in different political contexts, Palestinian women in Gaza and in Israel share common obstacles that derive from gender-discrimination in religious courts, and from social pressures that inhibit and punish women for speaking out for their personal status rights.



## Advocating for Gender-Sensitive Changes in the Religious Courts

In Israel, two overlapping – and in some cases competing – family court systems exist side by side. As Israel does not recognize civil unions, matters of marriage and divorce remain the province of the religious court system, where women have asymmetric rights and must contend with numerous mechanisms of gender-based discrimination. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of transparency on the part of religious courts, and inaccessibility of women to information regarding their rights. In 2016, Kayan's lawyers continued their advocacy work from previous years in this domain. Below please find short summaries of our work in the Ecclesiastical and Sharia courts.

**Ecclesiastical Courts:** In 2016 for the first time ever, Kayan was able to arrange for in person meetings with Christian court officials in order to discuss gender-based issues in the court. Kayan invited other activist lawyers working in the courts to the meeting in order to strengthen the presence of advocates of women's rights, and further develop an activist network. During the meeting Christian court officials were asked to respond to specific gender-based issues in the courts themselves, and engaged in advocacy discussions. As a result of these meetings, the officials agreed to adjust the exorbitantly high court fee for women who cannot afford to pay, and agreed to continue developing new methods for ensuring better treatment of women within the courts themselves. This included a long discussion on methods to enhance sensitivity when asking women to make testimonies on sexual or physical abuse in the courtrooms. This issue has come up many times amongst our clients, who are expected to speak openly about their experiences of abuse in front of the courtrooms, in front of their abuser, and in front of Ecclesiastical judges who are also their priests.

In February, a Kayan lawyer participated in and helped to coordinate a five-part training for the Israeli Bar Association's Ecclesiastical Court Committee. As a coordinator for the event, Kayan Lawyer Alhan ensured that gender-sensitive issues and women's rights were included on the agenda of the training. Thus, the trainings maintained a gender-sensitive lens in examining issues, and strategies for working in the Orthodox, Catholic, and Latin courts. Topics covered included: issues facing women as related to personal status (e.g. divorce, child custody, and alimony), differences between how issues of personal status are handled in the Ecclesiastical and Civil courts, and an analysis of the Vatican's new procedure for expediting divorce cases.



## Sharia Courts:

**Ending Obedience (ta'a) Laws:** In the beginning of 2016, Kayan focused on eradicating obedience (Ta'a) laws in the Sharia courts. As feminists, we find these laws inherently misogynistic, as they are a mechanism designed to give men power and control over women. However, in advocating for the eradication of such laws, we have faced many challenges, as we are not in a position in which we have leverage in advocating for internal changes in the courts. Thus we altered our strategy, and instead decided to educate and raise-awareness amongst the society and in particular, amongst other lawyers working the court system.

To begin our work on obedience, we did intensive research on how these laws are implemented in Sharia courts in Israel. The Sharia courts themselves refused to release any information on obedience cases to our lawyers, and therefore our research consisted of directly contacting lawyers who work within the Sharia courts, and interviewing them about their experiences with obedience procedures.

Overall, we found that 30-40 obedience suits are filed each year in the Sharia courts in Israel. Furthermore, we learned that orders for obedience are largely based on intimidation and coercion, as the Sharia courts have no legal mechanism or authoritative body (e.g. police) that can force a woman to comply with an obedience order. Near the end of 2016, after ongoing advocacy work, the Sharia courts agreed to release some case files about obedience suits. From this data, our legal team analyzed the details of how obedience suits are handled by the courts, and how the courts make decisions regarding obedience. Using all of this data, Kayan created a publication that was widely disseminated to the society and to legal professionals. In the publication we detailed our findings on obedience laws and their implementation in Israel, and called on other lawyers to refuse to work on cases related to obedience, and to speak out for women's rights within the courtrooms when obedience cases arise.



**Child Custody in the Sharia Courts:** In 2016 we also focused our work on issues related to child custody in the Sharia courts by holding a major roundtable on the subject. This was a time-sensitive issue, as due to changes in Israeli law, religious courts are also beginning to change their attitude towards child custody. On the level of the civil courts in Israel, there is a movement towards favouring laws that give equal claim to joint custody. This is a change from the past, where child custody until age 6 was almost always granted to the mother. While a change in law hasn't officially passed yet, we see that attitudes throughout the civil and religious courts are changing in relation to these newly proposed bills. We used the roundtable as a way to raise-awareness about this issue amongst key stakeholders. The roundtable, was facilitated by Rawan Eghbariah, from Kayan, Alhan Nahas Daud, from Kayan, and Lawyer Nisreen Kabaha, a lawyer from Tel Aviv. U and the supervisor of the Welfare Authority. In total 35 people attended, including lawyers, social workers, and activists. The content of the study day was on discriminatory laws that women face in child custody within the Sharia courts, and how the Sharia courts forces women to prove that a child should remain with her if she wishes to remarry. After the study day Kayan and Ma'an (A feminist NGO in the Naqab) published a written statement on this issue, and a Kayan lawyer gave an interview to the Mossawa Channel, who did a special report on this issue. This was just one of many reports written on the study day specifically, and on the issue of child custody in the Sharia court generally. These report demonstrate that holding such events we are increasing the public's awareness of major issues facing women within the religious courts, and are anchoring these issues onto the media's and the public's socio-political agenda.

**Appointing the First Woman Arbitrator in A Sharia Court Case:** As an example of a groundbreaking case in the Sharia courts, in 2016 we managed, for the first time ever, to appoint a woman arbitrator to represent a woman in divorce proceedings. Kayan had a special interest in advocating for the appointment of a woman arbitrator, as we were part of a successful high court petition in which we demanded that the Sharia courts include women arbitrators in divorce cases. This was a monumental victory for us, as we were able to advance women's leadership in a highly patriarchal institution. At the beginning of this project year, Kayan's lawyers monitored the Sharia courts, and requested a list of all of the women the court had appointed as arbitrators since the high court decision in 2014. The Sharia courts revealed that since the court ruling in 2014, not one single woman was appointed to arbitrate a divorce case.

With an overall negligence in the courts, Kayan's lawyers took the initiative of ensuring the appointment of a woman arbitrator in the Sharia court, and used a divorce case as an opportunity to do so. Our client fully agreed to our

suggestion of demanding a woman arbitrator, and ultimately the case was a complete success. Our client received all of her entitlements, and on a personal level, she reported that working with a female arbitrator made her feel supported and secure in sharing her experiences, and that she did not feel any patriarchal judgment. This is a groundbreaking step for women's rights in the Sharia court, and we look forward to encouraging more women to choose qualified and professional women arbitrators. In order to raise-awareness about the possibility of women arbitrators for Sharia court cases, we cooperated with Arabs48 in publishing an article on the topic.

## Awareness Raising and Advocacy For Sexual Harassment Prevention

Sexual harassment prevention has become a focal area of Kayan's work, and is an issue that we address through legal aid, advocacy, community outreach, and awareness raising. As the subject of sexual harassment is still considered taboo, one of Kayan's major goals has been to break the silence surrounding this issue so that women will feel secure in speaking out against violations, and so that the society will begin to honestly confront the prevalence of violations. Additionally, a major focus of our work has been ending the stigmatization of women who speak out against sexual harassment, as these women all too often face victim-blaming, are fired from their jobs, and are considered as "unhireable women." Thus, Kayan began 2016 with an intensive public campaign on the subject of sexual harassment prevention, with the goals of putting this issue on the social agenda.

**Sexual Harassment Is a Crime Campaign:** The campaign was held from the 7<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> of March, was titled "Sexual Harassment is a Crime," and featured 6 lectures, two plays, as well as Facebook and media elements. One of the key focuses of the campaign was discrete and not obvious forms of sexual harassment. We called these behaviors the "gray zone," and it is important that people recognize these micro-aggressions as forms of sexual harassment. During the campaign we also highlighted the legal elements of sexual harassment, which corresponded with the campaign title, as we aimed to expose sexual harassment as a literal crime. Our message reached thousands of Palestinian women, men, and youth from diverse locations, religions, backgrounds, and socioeconomic classes.

Some results of this campaign include an increase in the number of women calling Kayan's Arabic language hotline for free legal consultations involving sexual harassment, employers calling to request lectures and workshops for their staff, and an increase in reporting in the media on this issue. Major highlights resulting from this campaign include a meeting in May with managers and local appointees at al Mishadawi, a national grocery store chain and the largest employer of Arab women in Israel. This study day was a major advancement towards our goals, given our efforts to work more with major employers of Arab women in the private sector. Another development was working with the Nazareth Hospital, a major institution in the local community, to respond to an instance of sexual harassment. Kayan provided a three-part lecture series for the hospital which were largely attended by male employees. The lectures focused on the relationship between employees and patients. We also published a sexual harassment prevention protocol for the hospital staff to prevent future instances of harassment. Another result of the campaign included a lecture for 50 Arab employers at the Nazareth Rotary Club, which was the first time that male employers from the private sector contacted us to request a lecture. This was a major achievement for Kayan, as having employers approach us for such a lecture reveals a change in their mentality, as they are no longer denying the existence of sexual harassment, and are seeking more knowledge in order to ensure the security of women employees.



**Advocating for the Enforcement of Sexual Harassment Prevention Laws (1998)** According to Israeli Law, all workplaces with 10 or more employees must have an appointee for sexual harassment prevention and published sexual harassment prevention protocols. Kayan has found that many private businesses and even public offices are not in compliance with this law, but even more troubling is the fact that after doing extensive mapping we have found that the majority of Arab local authorities, which should be model employments, are also not in compliance with the law. This year, Kayan successfully advocated for the enforcement of sexual harassment prevention laws in 5 new Arab local authorities. Kayan intensively trained appointees in two of these locations, as the localities had never before had an appointee.

**The Forum of Appointees for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace:** In order to ensure appointees are equipped to fulfill their responsibilities we hold annual study days to update them on laws, and provide trainings on how to handle cases of sexual harassment including emotional, legal, and social dimensions of the cases. These appointees have been organized into a forum, which keeps in touch through an online portal, in which appointees share experiences, questions, get updates on laws, and receive direct support from Kayan's staff. In 2016, Kayan held two study days for the forum. In these study days, appointees learned methodologies for providing immediate psychological support to victims of sexual harassment, asking pertinent questions in a psychologically sensitive manner, and opening cases. They also reviewed updates to sexual harassment prevention laws, and discussed methods for awareness-raising in their workplaces. There was also a lecture by Al-Siwar organization, in which a representative of the NGO detailed their extensive experiences in providing support to Arab women victims of sexual harassment.



## Kayan in the Media

Media work is one of our strategies for awareness-raising, advocating for gender-sensitive changes that will benefit Palestinian women, holding decision-makers accountable for their role in curbing women's rights, and promoting the work of Palestinian women activists. Throughout the year Kayan publishes position statements, op-eds, and press releases, hosts journalists at our public activities, and gives in depth interviews on topics related to women's rights. Furthermore, this year Kayan made a strategic decision to promote the representation of grassroots women activists in the media, and therefore requested that activists from the field be the leads in television, radio, and newspaper interviews.

In 2016 over 30 of such media items were released to a diverse range of local and national media outlets. Below please find some examples of key media items published during the 2016 year. Please check our wordpress, English facebook, and website for English translations of selected articles.

- [Musawa T.V Interview on Women's Rights](#) with Kayan Director Rafah Anebtawi
- ["Kayan Launches Campaign Against Sexual harassment"](#) Press Release
- [News Article on Kayan's Roundtable](#) on Women's Status in Religious Courts
- [News Article on Jusur Annual Conference](#) on Ending Violence against women
- [News Article on Kayan's Women in the Media](#) Workshop for Media Professionals
- [Press Release on Advocacy Meeting](#) with Christian Court Officials
- [Remarriage Laws in the Christian Courts](#) Kayan Position Statement
- [16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women](#) Press Release
- [Panet Interview Video on Sexual Harassment](#) With Kayan Lawyer Nisreen Massarwi

**Thank you for reading our report, if you have any questions please email us at one of the following addresses:**

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[rafa@kayan.org.il](mailto:rafa@kayan.org.il) (Director)

**We also invite you to follow our work at:**

[www.kayan.org.il](http://www.kayan.org.il)

[Kayan Arabic Facebook](#)

[Kayan English Facebook](#)

[Kayan Twitter](#)

[Kayan Wordpress](#)