**Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence During the Corona Crisis –**

**The Histadrut's Reply to the Survey of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women**

1. Since the beginning of the pandemic – a 35% increase in inquiries for legal aid against the background of domestic violence. The data shows that 252 request cases for protective orders and restraining orders were opened, in addition to 52 inquiries received in "the hot line" established in the framework of the emergency system for the treatment of domestic violence, and 304 inquiries in total.

According to reports by the Israel Police - as of April 2020, there was a 16% increase in the number of complaints submitted about spousal violence (compared with the same period last year). In addition, there was a 41% increase in the number of complaints about sexual violence against children in the family, compared with the same period last year. According to reports of the Ministry of Social Affairs, in March there was a very significant increase in the number of inquiries to the emergency line of the Ministry of Social Affairs around violence against children and youth and a decrease in the number of inquiries around violence against women. It is quite possible that the reduction in number of inquiries to the emergency line in March is related to the difficulty of women harmed by violence to contact the emergency call center due to the quarantine and lack of privacy. In April 2020, the number of inquiries to the emergency line of the Ministry of Social Affairs on the background of spousal violence increased four-fold, compared to March. Since the beginning of the Corona crisis, 6 women have been murdered by their spouses in Israel. In addition, according to the data of Ministry of Social Affairs, 2 women and 2 men committed suicide on the background of domestic violence.

1. The emergency line of the Ministry of Social Affairs (118) continued to operate normally and around the clock. There is an emergency line operated by the Na'amat organization starting from the outbreak of the Corona crisis, which allows a telephone call or contact by a written message. An additional women organization, WIZO, also operates an emergency line.

The inquiries to the emergency lines raise many difficulties that constitute pressure factors into the violent framework. Most of the complaints are about the difficulty of the economic uncertainty and dealing with the children who are very difficult to get along with for a whole day. All of these constitute a catalyst and reinforcement for the pressures in the home where there is violence on different scales.

1. The State of Israel has not allowed alleviations in the quarantine for women harmed by violence. This was not an issue that was discussed, to our knowledge.
2. The 14 shelters for women harmed by violence in Israel (one of them is owned and managed by Na'amat-Histadrut's women movement) that operate on a routine basis, continued to operate as usual since the beginning of the Corona crisis and in general. The shelters absorbed women harmed by violence and their children throughout the period and were at an occupancy of approximately 90%. In some of the shelters, an isolation room operated, where the new women and children stayed for the first two weeks after arriving at the shelter. Some of the women and children also underwent a Corona test if necessary. Approximately 3 weeks ago, the Ministry of Social Affairs and WIZO opened a temporary emergency shelter for women harmed by violence and their children, which provides a response which also includes quarantine/distancing prevention for two weeks, in order to prevent a mass contagion in shelters. After two-three weeks, the women and children are supposed to move to one of the permanent shelters.
3. It was possible to apply to family courts for requests for protection orders under the Prevention of Domestic Violence Law, even during the quarantine period.
4. The courts and rabbinical courts operated in an emergency format and gave a response to only some of the issues that are relevant for women harmed by violence, such as: requests for protection orders, decisions on evidence arrangements of children. Discussions in the framework of divorce proceedings in family courts as well as divorce certificate discussions in the rabbinical courts – were rejected and didn't take place. They resumed work on May 17, 2020.
5. The health services continued to operate on the principle level, but at the practical level during the quarantine period, the Ministry of Health's messages were daunting concerning to arrival to clinics and hospitals. People were asked not to come to clinics and hospitals, unless it was a very urgent medical problem (supposedly to prevent the contagion of Corona). As a result, people have stayed away from health services. The hospitals reported that the emergency rooms were empty. Fertility treatments were discontinued. Only at a later stage, the Ministry of Health's messages changed. We assume that the women's non-arrival at the various health services has a direct impact on their health. It is worthwhile, for example, to collect data concerning the number of requests submitted to pregnancy termination committees during the quarantine period, compared to the average number on routine days.
6. Obstacles to the prevention and treatment of violence against women during the Corona crisis: At the beginning of the crisis, the welfare services were not defined as essential services and worked in a very limited format. Even after a formal definition of welfare services as essential services, most of the welfare departments, including domestic violence treatment centers (there are approximately 100 domestic violence treatment and prevention centers throughout Israel), still operated in a limited extent, making it difficult for the inquiry of women harmed by violence to receive assistance and counseling. The reason for this was that the Federation of Local Authorities and the Local Authorities who are operating the welfare services didn't act in accordance with the government's and Ministry of Social Affairs' decisions. In Israel, there are only two care services of out-of-home hostel for men who act violently and are removed from home by a protective order. Meaning, men removed by a protective order who don't have a housing solution outside the home independently, are left without a suitable response for housing and treatment; something which may lead them to violate the restraining order and return to the house where the woman who is the victim of violence resides. The Ministry of Social Affairs provided a material answer of participating in the payment for a hotel (up to NIS 200 per night, an amount that is especially tiny and not adapted to the real costs of staying in a hotel) for men removed from home, without a family's economic support, who have financial difficulties to finance their own stay in the hotel. This is a very limited and partial response, which gives a response only at the concrete level and not at the therapeutic level, which is necessary for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence.
7. Examples of good conduct for the treatment and prevention of violence against women during the Corona period by the government: establishment of a temporary emergency shelter for women harmed by violence and their children, which provides a response for the quarantine period for prevention of contagion. The shelter was established relatively late.
8. Examples of good conduct for the treatment and prevention of violence against women during the Corona by third-sector organizations: A broad public campaign to raise awareness with regard to the emergency lines and organizations that assist women harmed by violence and holding demonstrations against the increase of domestic violence.