

BAY AREA WOMEN IN BLACK

BAWIB focuses each vigil on another aspect of the Occupations of Iraq and the Palestinian Occupied Territories. This week we look at women's experience and provide some links to groups working for peace and justice in both regions.

Lives of Women Under Occupation

Palestinian Women:

"An analogy can be drawn between the psychological experience of a nation under siege and that of a woman living in an abusive relationship.... This poses a potentially dangerous situation for women, who will fall victim to a three-tiered process of violation. They are victimised by the political violence, living in perpetual fear for their safety and that of their families, while bearing the additional burdens imposed on them under harrowing conditions, such as the destruction of homes, the razing of agricultural property, the uprooting of trees and rampant unemployment.

Additionally, they are victims of heightened violence within the home, but are unable to express any of their suffering or anxiety, as they are forced into silence for fear of being blamed at the public level for being selfish and inconsiderate given the national emergency the whole society is undergoing, and at the private level from being blamed for their own victimisation– a vicious circle."

Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas, Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)

Iraqi Women:

"Under US occupation, Iraqi women have endured a wave of gender-based violence, including widespread abductions, public beatings, death threats, sexual assaults, "honor killings," domestic abuse, torture in detention, beheadings, shootings, and public hangings.

The first question asked of female detainees in Iraq is, "are you Sunni or Shia?"

The second is, "Are you a virgin?"

On both sides of the sectarian divide, attacks on women are committed in the name of religion. However their purpose is fundamentally political.... The veil on women is like a flag now."

Certain groups of women have been targeted: political leaders, professionals, academics and students, and those who publicly defend women's human rights."

The best-armed and most powerful perpetrators of gender-based violence in Iraq are those militias that have been trained, funded and armed by the United States.

All references: www.amnesty.org

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Iraqi Women Continued...

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The Shiite militias are the armed wings of the political parties given power by the US. "Their aim is to establish an Islamist theocracy and their social vision requires the subjugation of women and the elimination of anyone with a competing vision for Iraq's future."

Yifat Susskind, Violence Against Women Under US Occupation Iraq's Other War, 3/08/07.
www.madre.org

Israeli Women:

Oppression is oppression is oppression . . . There is a strong connection between violence against women and violence in the Occupied Territories. A soldier who serves in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and learns that it is permissible to use violence against other people is likely to bring violence back with him upon his return to his community.

*Ostrowitz, in **Noga**, Israeli feminist magazine*

A sharp increase in the rate of deadly domestic violence against women within Israeli households must also be seen as an indirect result of the military conflict. Nearly half of the women killed in domestic violence in Israel during the past four years were murdered by soldiers and security guards who carried licensed weapons that they turned on family members and partners.

Paradoxically, the existence of weapons mainly in the hands of men, aimed at increasing the public's sense of security, increases the lack of security in the private sphere."

Isha L'Isha (Women to Women) Haifa Feminist Center report

Join us at the Grand Lake Theater every Saturday at noon to register your protest and your presence as we demand our elected officials end both these disastrous Occupations.

Bay Area Women in Black are Jews and allies who stand against militaristic and fundamentalist leadership in all countries, including our own. We wear black as a sign of mourning for all the Iraqi, Israeli and Palestinian lives that have been lost as a result of war, militarization and violence. As part of the international movement of Women in Black, we seek to transform women's mourning for the dead into a powerful refusal of the inevitability of war.