

Family Protection Department (FPD) in Jordan: The Legal Arm to Protect Women and Children from Violence, Exploitation, and Abuse

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Abstract

Drawing on the facts that were coming from survivors and victims of domestic violence, sexual assaults and child abuse in Jordan and out of the challenges that social and legal personnel used to encounter while dealing with such cases, a holistic approach of practice was a crucial need. The Family Protection Department is a police department that was established to achieve this purpose. FPD today is one of the pioneering bodies in the MENA region that handles cases of gender-based violence, sexual assaults, domestic violence and child abuse in a one-stop service. This encourages people, who describe privacy and honor as deep values that shape their society, to report incidents of abuse since FPD fulfills their desire for privacy and confidentiality. This paper aims to shed light on the most important stages of the history of FPD establishment as experienced by myself as a police officer at that time. It also traces the emergence of police social work from the era of founding the Family Protection Department (FPD) of the Directorate of the Public Security in Jordan till 2019.

The paper examines the most significant governmental and none governmental initiatives that have provided support for forensic social workers to reach out to at-risk children, abused children, and Domestic Violence clients. This paper also discusses the role of forensic social work in Jordan in advocating for the social service needs of abused children, those at risk of neglect and abuse, their families as well as of perpetrators.

Keywords: Family Protection Department, Child abuse, Gender-based violence, Domestic violence, Forensic social work sexual assaults, Jordan

Introduction

In September 1997, the Public Security Directorate (PSD) in Amman initiated the idea of the Family Protection Division to deal with Domestic Violence and sexual abuse cases. That time my rank was a First Lieutenant at the Public Relations Department of the PSD enjoying my work as a reviewer for newspapers that are issued in the English language to observe news that is related to the security and services in Jordan. I moved against my will since I had no idea what so ever about the newly established department. I moved there with a promise if I do not like it I have a choice to go back to the PRD. The goal of the establishment was to implement a system to work in partnership with the institutions concerned with women's and children's issues. Also, PSD wanted to consolidate the principle that states "Police Serves the People". FPD Division was established in February 1998 at that time in Amman near Alshmaisani Police Station (FPD brief, 1998). In the beginning, the Family Protection Division was called as a Unit. Its mission was to handle cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The main objective of the

Family Protection Unit was to investigate physical abuse and neglect of children from within the family and sexual abuse for all other victims regardless of the age or sex of the victims or if the abuse was from inside or outside the family. The Unit/Division was upgraded on the second of November 1999 to become a Department called the Family Protection Department which is the name it still carries. So, the FPD started as a division in a police station west of Amman to become today a full-fledged police department within the Jordanian PSD. My colleagues and I set the policy, procedures and ethical code for the new established Unit. We also started our advocacy and awareness campaigns.

In all meetings, I attended with the Head of the department and the stakeholders in the field, commitment to make FPD a pioneer body in the area was the main theme. Stakeholders in the PSD worked hard at that time to make FPD a formal system that encompassing several ministries and governmental agencies. It also to encompasses non-governmental and civil society organizations. Some of these organizations are the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Jordan River Foundation, and others. Moreover, PSD wanted a multi-disciplinary approach when handling cases of child sexual

assaults and commercial sexual exploitation of children, as well as the referral of victims to appropriate rehabilitation services.

Why the FPD?

Jordan as many Arab Muslim countries is a conservative country when it comes to tribal and social ties even though it is an open country and most of the population is educated and serious. However, in such societies as everywhere in the globe, cases of domestic violence, child abuse, and spousal conflict are considered a family private issue. So, for us implementing a system like the FPD in Jordan was not an easy task to be handled at that time. However, many issues were raised at the beginning of the nineties in Jordan that highlighted the need for a system that could handle cases of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assaults in Jordan.

Local newspapers and TV back that time brought news about new types of family crimes that started to appear in Jordan at the beginning of the nineties due to the change that happened to the society and the growth it encountered that period especially the fled of thousands of Palestinians from Kuwait to Jordan after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. I could hear and see new forms of crimes that appeared on the surface most of these crimes were family crimes. Moreover, the methods of family crime got worse than ever at the beginning of the nineties. Some of these crimes formed public opinion issues that attracted the Public and were their main interests for that period and after. For example, in 1998 and few months before initiating FPD, a teenager called Saeed Qashash, 17 years old, shot and killed 12 members of his family including his mother, his father, two brothers, four sisters, a stepbrother, two nephews and one of his friends. When Qashash asked about his motivation for committing such a crime he stated that he was stressed in his school and his family had a higher expectation of him that he would not meet. In 1997, another awful crime that the Jordanian society could not believe happened. That crime was the killing of the two kids Hanin 9 years old and Hani on the hands of their father using Cyanide poisoning and killing both of them in minutes. The father was an educated engineer from a wealthy family who brought cyanide with him from a working visit to Canada. When he was asked about his reasons for the crime all that he admitted is family conflict. The engineer was known by the head of the FPD that time which pushed him harder to work against violence within the family. However, the last straw that broke the camel's back was a different case. In 1997, a young Iraqi British woman was sexually harassed by a stranger and she decided to go press charges in Al Shmeisani Police Station. Since the first minute she entered the Police Station, she was interrogated with the same questions again and again. She was investigated by almost six different people in the police station and unfortunately treated badly in a way that she was blamed for the way she looked and dressed. For everybody in the police station, the way she was dressed and talked was the main reason why she got assaulted and raped. She felt that humiliating is not less than the sexual assault itself. Therefore, she dropped charges and decided not to go farther. However, she decided to go back to London and wrote about her experience as she was a journalist. Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talal the time, saw the article the Iraqi British lady wrote about her experience in Jordan and decided that there must be a better way to treat those who are victims of sexual assaults to protect them from getting victimized again and again especially in criminal justice settings. Crown Prince Hassan decided that Ms. Patricia Salti would lead this project in Jordan. Luckily enough, she was the right person to pursue the project for years to follow.

When the FPD was first started, I used to talk with families approaching the department for different reasons about how they view the department and what do they think of its existence. Some of these families thought it would interfere in the family private business. Others considered the topic "family protection" a foreign title and a western Idea that does not belong to the Jordanian culture, that is stemmed from religion and tradition. One of the most themes to convince people of the need for such a system that was used at that time was to explain to clients that violence against women and children hinders the need for family planning in Jordan. By the time, the majority of people have support FPD, they have believed in its mandate and still support its mission.

The Mandate of the Family Protection Department

After several workshops and meetings at the highest level of PSD and governmental and non-governmental organizations, we managed to set the mandate of the FPD in 1998. The mandate stresses the fact that the department deals with domestic violence, sexual assaults, child physical violence when it perpetrated by a family member, child neglect, Internet sexual exploitation and fugitive or runaway women and girls. In the first instance, FPD came to provide legal and policing services for victims of violence, which includes receiving complaints and investigating cases of violence. Then FPD upgraded their services to children by utilizing video techniques with children and follow up with courts. FPD also works to provide medical examination provided by a forensic medicine doctor at the same premises to avoid transfer clients from a place to another which consume their willingness to complain because clients know that they live in a small society and paying visits to police departments, forensic doctors or hospitals for forensic examination hinder their safety and reputation in such a conservative society. Moreover, FPD provides social and psycho-behavioral services including following up with the victim as well as developing case studies on the social conditions that the victim lives in to support them.

Investigating Cases in the FPD

The first thing FPD started with after the establishment is capacity building and empowers those who are chosen to work in the Department. I was like to be one of the only eleven members who were chosen based on high profile from within thousands of police officers under the umbrella of PSD in Jordan. A British police officer was brought from Lancashire Police to train us in a two-month intensive victim's centered approach in investigating and treating cases of Domestic violence and child abuse. The first lesson was about the role of the FPD which is to protect the community from family violence, sexual assaults, and exploitation. We promised that continuous training courses for personnel who work in this field will never stop. Also, we learned that it is our job to lead awareness campaigns and sessions in society's organizations and schools to prevent the occurrence of such crimes. Later, we learned that violence could happen to anyone and by anyone. Moreover, we understood that we will start with women, elderly and children as they are the most vulnerable groups that the department deals with. Those vulnerable people, of course, are the most indigent for help. Therefore, the FPD put its personnel qualifications and all its expertise to help all and this group in particular. Children's legal testimonies are recorded on video to spare them from having to endure potentially painful or traumatic hearing and court appearances.

From that time till now, officers at the FPD interview cases according to well – defined guidelines. Interviews take place in rooms equipped

with discreet video cameras and microphones. The rooms where child interviews take place are equipped and furnished in a child-friendly atmosphere. Police officers trained by police officers from Lancashire Police on investigating child abuse using video cameras. Two officers are involved in the child abuse video interview. While the main officer leads the interview by asking the proper questions to the child in the main room another officer, takes notes, record the interview and reminds the main officer in case he forgets anything or anything is needed for the sake of a good clear and legal interview. The second officers monitor the whole proceedings of the interview and all his suggestions to the main officer via an earpiece in the main officer's ear. Of course, both are trained on the proper techniques of interviewing abused children and both follow the steps of the victims' focused approach in the investigation as learned from expertise in Lancashire Police. The first few questions aimed at creating a relaxed and friendly atmosphere that could break the ice between both the victim and the officer. These questions are general like "what kind of sport you like? What would you like to do in the coming summer vacation? Who are your best friends in school?" Then the interview flows until the needed evidence or the whole account of the abuse is aware of and recorded.

Interview Process at the FPD

As I mentioned earlier in this paper, Family Protection Department started with training few police officers, social workers who were deployed from the Ministry of Social Development, and a forensic doctor from the Ministry of Health. As I indicated previously, a Police Officer from Lancashire police Department was chosen to train the first group of Jordanian personnel who were intending to lead the Family Protection Project in Jordan and she was specialized in interviewing abused children under the umbrella of law. It worth mentioning that the sergeant's name is Carol Woodcock.

Intensive child abuse victims' centered approach investigation took place at the Department and at the same time, cases were being received. That was a great experience for officers, social workers, and forensic doctors. The transition between the theoretical knowledge through the training courses in the British police officer training classes and the immediate application of that theoretical knowledge was a great process of learning the best practice approach when dealing with child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assaults in Jordan.

I still remember the day when sergeant Woodcock explained child sexual assaults and presented cases from within the family where a father or a brother rapes or sexually assaulted a daughter or a sister in the family, all of us said we do not need to learn a lot about this issue since we do not have cases of incest in Jordan. We are Muslims and conservatives and this never happens in our society. Sergeant Woodcock just laughed and said: "no, your society has it, but it is not being reported". A few days later, my colleague and I had the chance to interview the first sexually abused daughter by her father. That was a very tragic time for both me and my colleague.

The pieces of training focused on the process of investigation at the FPD takes the following steps:

1. Receiving cases at the Reception area
2. Conducting the legal interview
3. The Forensic Examination
4. The Social Work interview
5. Submitting the case to the specialized court (most of the FPD

cases are dealt with by the Criminal Justice Court)

6. Back to the FPD for more social support and empowerment of survivors.

Rooms and Facilities

Since the establishment, FPD has focused on the wellbeing of its clients. Infrastructure went along with the training of FPD personnel to meet the criteria of a friendly atmosphere for both victims and their families. Interviewing victims is a human rights process at the FPD. Two interview rooms are designated to interview women. These rooms are women-friendly facilities, comfortable and not based on formal settings to suit the women's status psychological needs. Rooms were equipped through the generous support of UNICEF and PSD.

Children's interview rooms are also designed in a child-friendly atmosphere to match the child's victims' needs. These rooms are equipped with toys, furniture, and colors to constitute a child-friendly place. Children interviews sometimes recorded on a videotape facility in cases of sexual assaults and severe physical abuse when the child is above the age of six and can give his statement about the incident.

Who Interview Victims at the FPD?

Female police officers and female social workers investigate and interview female clients and children clients as well as women and children witnesses and women offenders. Whereas, male officers and male social workers investigate and interview male clients who are victims or survivors of sexual assaults, domestic violence, and child abuse. Male offenders also investigated by male officers and male social workers.

FPD Partners

FPD has successfully built over the past years' partnerships with various other stakeholders. To that extent, the Family Protection Department is represented and participates in all relevant meetings including violence against women and child abuse regardless of whether the organizers are governmental, non-governmental or UN bodies. For example, the FPD works in cooperation with national entities such as the social support which is provided for the victims and their families is provided by a staff member seconded from the Ministry of Social Development. Also, FPD networked with different national organizations to pass a law regarding protecting the family from domestic violence. The law was passed now and gives officers at the FPD precautionary protection measures towards offenders and gives them the right to keep offenders up to 24 hours in the FPD custody. Moreover, the law gives FPD the rights to take quasi-judicial decisions and actions that need special judicial supervision.

On the other hand, the purpose of any partnership between FPD and other local and international organizations was to bridge any gaps between civil society and the Department. For example, UNICEF is the main partner of the FPD who has financed most of the Department's equipment such as the Forensic Unit at the FPD. They mainly financed the acquisition of the Colposcopy, a medical instrument to examine rape cases against women and girls and found out if the hymen has been broken or not. Since then the very detailed digitized photos are not admissible in courts. The Forensic Doctor at the FPD bases her / his reports on such proof, which is crucial for the prosecution's case.

In 2005, FPD collaborated with Save the Children – Denmark to address issues of family violence and child protection. The partnership focused first on developing the capacity of the FPD staff to reinforce their efforts to end violence against children and inside the family. To establish this, they offered technical knowledge and skills training to empower FPD personnel. The aim was to empower police officers, social workers and the doctors working at the FPD not only to investigate the cases using the high standards manuals but also to work with other Jordanian civil organizations, to act together and to undertake advocacy initiatives. The Danish projects impacted on the FPD have been noticed. The overall of knowledge and awareness about services of the FPD, the role of civil society and the rights of children and women have increased.

To build strong ties and sustainable civil society organizations that work in the field of family protection and child abuse. Save the Children – Denmark was one of the first organizations that FPD collaborated with. Save the Children – Denmark provided eight multi-dimensional and flexible capacity building to FPD staff. It collaborated with the Department by using a manual outlining case management procedure, which is, based on agreed international standards those priorities the best interest of the child. It also provided information about the referral system so FPD can take a comprehensive, robust, collective approach to family and child protection. Because of the Danish projects with the FPD, all Divisions of the FPD follow the same procedures and share experience in using models the main center uses. All Divisions also have the same equipment that is existed in the main branch of the FPD.

To give credits to those who pushed the Department forward, we cannot deny the fact that the British Embassy DFID, paid all their efforts and put almost 3 million Pounds on this project. They did not put only money in this project, but efforts, faith, and experience. All, Ms. Patricia Salti, Rana Saifi, Maha Homs, Fadel al Hmoud, Judge Mohammad Tarawneh, Dr. Moe'men Hadidi, Dr. Hani Jahshan, Judge Taghreed Hikmat, Nadia Bushnaq and hundreds of other professionals worked day and night to see this project on the ground providing quality services to clients of domestic violence, sexual assaults, and child abuse.

Regional Cooperation

Regional cooperation was strengthened and the Department's ability to support Arab Countries to establish similar services was enhanced. Two regional conferences were held with fifty-six representatives from sixteen Middle Eastern Police Departments. Approximately, eighty representatives from international, regional and Jordanian civil society organizations, governmental agencies and stakeholders attended the conferences as well. Police officers and social workers from FPD have been deployed to many countries in the regions to train police and social workers staff who work in the field of family protection and child abuse. Examples are Iraq, Kurdistan, Palestine, Sudan, UAE, Qatar, and Lebanon.

The National Framework for Family Protection

The national framework for family protection outlines the roles and responsibilities of different organizations within the country's child protection system, as well as step-by-step procedures. All PSD stations are mandated by internal procedures to refer cases of child abuse including sexual abuse to the FPD. The FPD runs a social

work office in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development whereby social workers conduct an assessment and follow up of cases. The FPD also has access to psychiatrists in partnership with the Ministry of Health. National Council for Family Affairs review the National Framework for Family Protection on annual bases and update it when it is needed and with the consultant of all those stakeholders who work in the field of family and child protection.

New Vision

Newest research in Jordan recommends that the Jordanian government stress the values and principles of equality based on gender. Research in Jordan stresses the fact that there is a crucial need to safeguard a secure livelihood for families in Jordan through effective strategies that prevent and treat violence against women and children. This could never happen without governmental organization services, with the enforcement of law legal punishment against all types of family violence. FPD works to achieve this vision since the first day of establishment. Honor crimes.

To prove working on the new standards and to keep up-to-date with the arising global social problems especially the problems that are escalating with the new styles of technologies and online gaming. FPD started working to prevent commercial sexual exploitation of children over the internet, FPD launched the Information Technology related to sexual exploitation of children project. The project was funded by the Public Security Directorate and Save the children. It involves a study to determine how prevalent IT-related sexual exploitation of children in Jordan, assess the number of children who use the internet, how these children are groomed by offenders, as well as the websites most used by children. Mapping Internet service providers (ISPs) and Internet Cafes' are also investigated. The project will facilitate the involvement of the FPD in an international network to track abusers.

Family and Child Protection Training Center at the FPD

I was privileged to head the first FPD Regional Training Center (FPDRTC) at the FPD. The FPDRTC established to help in capacity buildings of those who work in the field of family and child protection and provide quality services to those who provide social work services, police interviews, and investigation and strengthen abilities of local and regional organizations that provide services for vulnerable. FPDRTC has trained hundreds of police officers, social workers, psychologists, prosecutors and judges. Sometimes the center conveys academics to transfer their theoretical and clinical knowledge to those who are working in the field of Family and Child Protection. Trainers of Trainee courses have been held to the trainers of the FPD so those who were trained are now able to train their peers on the issues of concern and those related to domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assaults.

Many basic training courses took place in the department. Other advanced and specialized courses have been also held outside and inside the department. It is also worth mentioning that FPD trainers conducted training workshops and training courses in different parts of the Arab World like Sudan, Iraq, Kurdistan, Lebanon, Qatar, UAE, and Palestine. The themes of this training are combating all forms of sexual assaults and violence against women and children, in particular, to reduce the amount of victimizing the victims through following victim-centered techniques in interviewing clients and to promote gender equality.

Conclusion

To sum up, my paper persuasively argued that although abuse of women and children within Arab Muslim families, Jordan an example, is proscribed and therefore should not occur, abuses of various kinds – including sexual abuse of children – does in fact occur, as revealed and documented by the Family Protection Department. The paper discussed the multidisciplinary approach that the department follows to prevent, investigate, and treat domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assaults. Also, it illustrated the obstacles the department faces while tackling violence and abuse crimes and recommended a few ways to decrease the prevalence of violence against women and children in Jordan. The paper gave the bigger weight to changing attitudes of people towards these crimes since tolerance towards violence against women and children is deeply rooted in the mentality of people in Jordan. Of course, law enforcement is the sons of the society and carries the same attitudes and beliefs towards these crimes. Some of the beliefs that should be changed are the burden of blame and shame which is usually put on the victims of abuse rather on the perpetrators.

Family Protection Department which started as a police unit and ended up a legal arm to protect victims of domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assaults managed to give a voice to voiceless victims through access to cases from 1998 to present. FPD has played an integral role in creating more accessible resources for victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Despite all the challenges that the Department encountered, it managed to attract the regions' eyes as the protector of victims and the advocator to combat all types of violence and abuse against women and children in Jordan. It also has attracted the international community to have a stand-in providing additional support and funding to projects in Jordan that would increase family protection services.

Today and after years of establishment, the FPD showed signs of progress. Before the establishment of FPD, women who needed immediate protection would be put into jail. Many women from those who did not want to go to jail, preferred to return to their abusive husbands or families. However, after the establishment of the Department women's shelter establishment improved services to women and children who needed immediate attention, rather than putting them in jail for their protection. FPD provided free services and gave women and children incentives to keep themselves safe at the facility, rather than turn down protection and go back to their abusive environments. Before the establishment of FPD, the supportive legal system for women and children was not supportive enough where now there is a Family Protection Law (2008) and the current Code of Criminal Justice was modified to allow video recording as a piece of evidence in court. Since the establishment of FPD cases of domestic violence and child abuse are not closed after being submitted to the court or the governor as before the establishment but are back to the department for more counseling and psychosocial services. Moreover, Psychosocial services are provided to victims of domestic violence, sexual assaults, and child abuse.

Currently, capacity building for all those who work in the field of family protection. Specialized training courses on domestic violence, GBV, sexual assaults, child abuse, human rights standards, and international human rights law. The most effective work which reflects on the whole region is the establishment of the first Regional Training Center at the FPD which conducts training on the related topics. The Regional Training Center has not only helped in building

capacities of personnel who work on domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assaults, but also encourages more awareness, outreach, and advocacy on Gender-based violence, sexual assaults, domestic violence, and child abuse which are taking place periodically. Finally, FPD maintains a database and information to study and analyze issues related to domestic violence which helps research and studies to combat the violence and stand united against gender inequality [1-17].

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