

# Police Response to Violence Against Women Yemen as a Case Study

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## Introduction

Violence Against Women is a subject of great interest to organizations and institutions concerned with human rights. The Fourth International Conference dealing with women's issues described violence against women as a form of human rights violations that is least discussed though widely prevalent.

Domestic violence usually occurs within families and behind closed doors. It is the result of the unbalanced power structure in a husband/wife relationship within the family and in society at large. Since men are the legislators, judges, officers of law, providers for health and family planning, educators, husbands and brothers, they play a major role in sustaining and emphasizing violence or in combating it. Men's positive efforts ought to contribute to changing stereotypical beliefs which allow leniency in matters pertaining to violence against women. Furthermore, such efforts will subsequently bring the issue of violence to the forefront where it will no longer be perceived as merely a private internal family matter. Since policemen play a very essential role in crime prevention, their positive interaction with reported or unreported cases, will contribute to the eradication of such a phenomenon.

Furthermore, in many Arab countries policemen and the judicial body fail to comprehend the ill effects of domestic violence. According to them it is a private matter pertaining only to the family involved. This attitude largely contributes to its widespread in our communities.

In this paper, the researcher will try to portray the mentality and attitude of Yemeni policemen when dealing with cases of violence against women. This will help in understanding the major factors which contribute to such a behavior and will in turn result in practical suggestions that will help to increase awareness, encourage the adoption of a positive approach to abused women, and put an end to such a practice.

## The Role of the Judicial Body in Dealing with the Phenomenon of Violence Against Women

The Judiciary can play an important role in dealing with violence against women through the adoption of preventive programs. Given that the judicial body is in close contact

with the community, keeping abreast of all the reported cases of assault will enable it to either prevent or put an end to such human rights violations.

This effective role that could be adopted by the judiciary is hindered by the stereotypical belief that violence is a private matter that should not be discussed in public. Since the aggressors are mostly close family members namely husband, father, brother, etc. policemen refrain from taking the complaint seriously.

## Attitudes of Policemen Towards Violence Against Women

The mere presence of women in police stations provokes different attitudes among policemen. Some develop a negative attitude towards these victims especially that in their opinion it is a daring step for a woman to come and report her husband or any member of her family. She is categorised as a bad example since tradition dictates that a woman should be patient and tolerant. Furthermore, policemen do not sympathize with battered women - who are expected to sacrifice their well-being for the sake of the family - because they believe in the stereotype that no woman is battered unless she asked for it. Other policemen feign compassion and mislead these women into believing that they sympathize with them. There are some cases where policemen hide ulterior motives and take advantage of the weakness of these women and often try to sexually assault them and harrass them. Nevertheless, the attitude of police officers towards assaulted women varies depending on the educational and social background.

It is important to note that in Yemen there are no set rules that protect battered women. Thus the proceeding of each case is left to the policeman in charge who deals with each case in his own way. All the factors mentioned reveal the need to investigate the attitude of policemen towards women victims of violence.

## The Aim of the Research

The Researcher aims to answer the following questions:

1. Why are Yemeni policemen inclined to exercise violence against women.
2. Does rank and year of service affect this inclination?
3. Is age a factor in determining the level of such inclination?

4. Does the education level affect the degree of inclination?  
 5. In the opinion of these police men, what are the main reasons which induce violence against women.

### Sample and Methodology of the Research

The research was implemented on 120 police men working in the Department of Criminal Research and police stations in Sanaa, the capital. The period was very limited and extended only from mid September 1999 to mid October 1999. In setting the scale to measure the level of inclination, the researcher used the following tools: Review of literature on the same subject, interviews with police personnel and women, and a 30 item questionnaire. Statistical tools : Percentage, Standard Deviation, Mean and Corrolation. Out of the 120 questionnaires collected 6 were disregarded due to incomplete information.

The following tables 1-6 indicate the distribution of policemen by rank, age, level of education, area of residence, marital status, and years of service

**Table 1. Distribution of Policemen by Rank**

Rank	Number	Percentage
Soldier	36	34.6
1st & 2nd Lieutenant	28	26.9
Colonel	35	33.6
Not specified	5	4.8
Total	104	99.9

**Table 2. Distribution of Policemen by Age**

Age	Number	Percentage
19-24	8	7.69
24-29	19	18.26
29-34	22	21.12
34-39	25	24.4
39-44	18	17.34
44-49	5	4.8
49-54	3	2.88
54-59	4	3.84
Total	104	100

**Table 3. Distribution of Policemen by Level of Education**

Level	Number	Percentage
Elementary	8	7.69
Intermediate	11	10.57
Secondary	18	17.3
University	38	36.53
Graduate Level	16	15.38
No Answer	13	12.5
Total	104	100

**Table 4. Distribution of Policemen by Area of Residence**

Area	Number	Percentage
Rural	50	48.1
Capital	51	49
No Answer	3	2.8
Total	104	100

**Table 5. Distribution of Policemen by Marital Status**

Status	Number	Percentage
Married	84	80.1
Single	18	17.3
Divorce	1	1.3
No Answer	1	1.3
Total	104	100

**Table 6. Distribution Policemen by Years of Service**

Years of Service	Number	Percentage
2-7	25	24.1
7-12	26	25.1
12-17	21	20
17-22	25	24.1
22-27	3	2.88
27-32	3	2.88
32-	1	0.970
Total	104	100

### Results

As Table 7 indicates, a high percentage of men in the police force have an average-strong inclination to exercise violence. Table 8 also indicates there is a direct link between their level of inclination and rank. Moreover, years of service and age had no direct effect on their inclination, but indicators used in the study clearly show that inclination increases with men who have lower levels of education and long years of service.

**Table 7. Distribution of Policemen by Level of Inclination**

Level	Number	Percentage
Weak (27-44)	5	4.8
Average (44-61)	55	52.88
Strong (61-78)	44	42.32
Total	104	100

**Table 8. Distribution by Rank & Level of Inclination**

Rank	Number	Level
Soldier	39	Average (56.35)
1st & 2nd Lieutenant	29	Strong (66.41)
Colonel	36	Average (58.05)
Total	104	



Source: Daiffa, Women's Algeria (drawings)

*Domestic violence is the result of the unbalanced power structure in a husband/wife relationship*

Finally, in answer to the most common reason justifying violence against women, 70.8 % of the policemen answered "a sick husband", Table 9. They believe that sick husbands usually exhibit violence to cover up their weaknesses. "Equality" was rated as the second most common reason. In their opinion, women who seek work outside their homes in search of equality tend to neglect their family duties.

**Table 9. Reason % Justifying Violence**

Reason	Percentage
Sick Husband	70.8
Equality	65.16
Working Woman	61.5
Husband's Revenge	60.6
A Way to get Divorce	56.1
Conflict with in-laws	53.5
Overspending	51.3
Jealousy	32.1

**Recommendations**

1. To incorporate human rights concepts in the program offered at the police academy and precisely those related to women's issues in Islam.
2. To establish a proper channel between civil society organizations, and the Ministry of Interior to protect victims of violence and prevent such crimes.
3. To establish a women police force specialized with victims of violence and women prisoners.
4. To establish a special department at the Ministry of Interior to work with the family at large acting as a counseling agent, thus protecting women and their children from any acts of violence..

Summarized and Translated by Anita Nassar

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