

# Iron Swords War

SNAPSHOT



November 21,  
2023\*

## Focus on Women and Girls in War

\* The brief offers a current overview<sup>1</sup> based on the information accessible to us at this time.

### The Challenge

Philanthropic activity related to gender and women has been a topic of discussion in Israel and around the world for a long time. However, the data shows that the extent of giving to organizations advocating for women and feminist organizations is very modest. Thus, even in routine times, actions are required to raise awareness and garner support for women and their unique needs.



These challenges intensify during wartime. The current challenge is to identify, discern, and respond to the gender dimensions within the crisis. All of this should be viewed against a backdrop of concern of upholding significant achievements that have been made to advance women's rights over the years, amidst struggles characterized by "running a marathon, not a sprint."

### Background | Systemic Gender Inequality

Systemic gender inequality, manifested in the exclusion of women from decisive decision-making, lies at the core of the harm to women in the crisis of war. Thus, the voices of women are not heard – not as soldiers when they warned about Hamas's apparent preparations beyond the border for action, and not now – around decision-making tables in dealing with the immediate and long-term emergency.

### The Impact of the War on Women

➤ **In general, the government lacks a diverse gender perspective** – there is an ongoing issue of "gender blindness" on the part of government administrations, compounded by deficiencies in social services. Consequently, women's organizations operating in Israeli civil society have taken upon themselves the complex tasks of providing responses to women's needs, whether that be humanitarian, therapeutic (mental health), legal, informational, or intermediate solutions.

As in routine times (especially in Israel recently), in times of war, the fundamental need is to carve out a place at decision-makers' tables for women.

1. This status report is based on information presented at JFN Network meeting on November 21, 2023. The speakers in the meeting included:

- **Ayelet Regev Bat-Or**, former CEO of the Authority for the Advancement of Women
- **Dr. Yael Hason**, Director of the Gender Department, Adva Center
- **Dr. Ronit Amit**, Founder and Director of the Social Department at the Adva Center - Research and Development
- **Kalela Lancaster**, Representative in Israel, NCJW

- **Secondary trauma for women is extremely likely**, both as primary caregivers and in their nuclear and extended families, often within the home due to reserve duty, as well as in their professional lives – childcare, elderly care, in the community, among the direct victims of the conflict, in therapeutic professions, in the education system, and more. Because these cycles of impact may lead to secondary trauma, it is crucial to provide training for medical teams—in clinics, in the community, and in hospitals—to pay attention, recognize signs of secondary trauma, and provide appropriate responses.
- **Domestic Violence** – Emergency events in the past have taught us about the tendency for an increase in the incidences of domestic violence during emergencies and afterward—while women are often the first to be affected. Living arrangements of entire families in a single hotel room or makeshift spaces for an extended period can pose a real and substantial risk. Responses need to be expanded: shelters for women and children, transitional housing, and other housing solutions, while also raising awareness among community caregivers to pay attention to signs indicating harm within the family.
- **Trauma and Post-Trauma Due to Sexual Violence**
  - Stories and images of horror and atrocities from October 7, 2023, especially in the context of sexual violence, may serve as triggers that elicit trauma and post-trauma among women in general and specifically women who were harmed by sexual violence in the past. Raising awareness is required among community caregivers.
  - Various organizations are actively collecting information and documenting crimes that took place on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, both in general and against women in particular, for presentation and the implementation of an explanatory and action-oriented campaign in the international arena with women’s and human rights organizations, regarding war crimes involving sexual violence.
- **Expansion of Weapon Permits** – Direct threats to women are present based on past data on the murder of women using licensed (and unlicensed) firearms.
- **Employment Sector** – Women, already affected during routine times (such as part-time positions, underemployment, etc.), are further impacted by the closure of the education system, directly affecting women who are primary caregivers for children, as well as recruitment for reserve duty (partners or women themselves). Professional factors clarify that the economy is entering a crisis that may last a long time, and data already indicates the impact on women—60% of new job seekers are women. The impact is also on independently employed women and owners of small and micro-businesses (a common source of income for women).
- **Women from Vulnerable Sectors** – Vulnerable sectors of the population are even more harshly affected during emergencies. This includes Arab and Bedouin women, ultra-Orthodox women, women in poverty, migrants, asylum seekers, sex workers, and more. These women need assistance and continuity in programs in which they participate during routine times, with additional consideration for the harm that may arise from the emergency situation.

## The Role of Philanthropy

- **Advocating for emergency grants for women during wartime**, led by the Zvi and Ofra Meitar Family Foundation, the Shashua Foundation, NCJW, the Baruch and Ruth Rappaport Foundation, and the Shusterman Foundation. Emphasizing the gender dimensions of the crisis, ranging from the exclusion of women from decision-making tables, vulnerability to violence and sexual violence, and the impact on the employment market – philanthropy plays a crucial role in urging campaigns and initiatives to allocate resources specifically to address the unique needs of women and strategically improve women’s systems throughout and after wartime.
- Paying attention to the exclusion of women from decision-making tables, and Israel’s low ranking compared to OECD countries regarding the status of women, philanthropy plays a key role in supporting and developing women’s leadership across all sectors, from civic engagement to public service and political representation.
- “Gender Lens” Giving – Improving the status of women and amplifying their voices during wartime and in general requires persistence and scalability. “Gender lens” giving necessitates data-driven policies and ongoing monitoring of the impacts of programs on women and women’s needs.

- Philanthropic partnerships and the availability of updated data increase the likelihood of gaining support from international organizations.
- [NCJW](#) – Invests in “field building” strategies which strengthen coordination and collaboration between women’s organizations in Israel. NCJW’s emergency fund focuses on the field of gender justice and equity, is driving field building work in the ecosystem and can serve as a resource.
- Attention to small organizations, grassroots groups, and civic initiatives – even if they are not sustainable, they are close to the ground and may have the ability to provide immediate and local responses to needs that might otherwise go unnoticed.†