

TECHNICAL REPORT

WOMEN AND VIOLENT RADICALIZATION IN JORDAN



اللجنة الوطنية الأردنية لشؤون المرأة
The Jordanian National Commission for Women

 **UN**
WOMEN 

TECHNICAL REPORT

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RADICALIZATION IN

JORDAN



UN WOMEN AND THE JORDANIAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

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INTRODUCTION

Like many countries around the world, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan faces risks from “violent radicalization,” often defined as a process through which a person comes to embrace the use of violence to serve an ideology, religion or political goal. Violent radicalization may lead to violent extremism and terrorism, therefore threatening the rights and well-being of citizens. The ways in which violent extremism affects women—both as victims and participants—are rarely discussed and remain underexplored. As Jordan moves toward taking new efforts to combat violent extremism within its borders, it is necessary for all involved to have a deeper understanding of how women in Jordan play roles in preventing or promoting such radicalization.

This study was commissioned by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) as part of an effort to support the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the Government of Jordan in developing a National Action Plan for implementing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000). The research was conducted by Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development and Search for Common Ground in February and March 2016.

UNSCR 1325, passed on 31 October 2000, called for the United Nations (UN) and Member States to promote women’s inclusion in decision-making processes about peace and security and to recognize the ways in which conflict affects women. Recently, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism have come to be seen as linked to issues of women, peace and security,¹ as articulated through UNSCR 2122 (2013) and UNSCR 2422 (2015). Resolution 2122 reiterated the United Nation’s commitment to devoting resources and attention to the women, peace and security agenda while calling for increased women’s leadership and representation within these efforts. Resolution 2422 called for countries to continue integrating their programmes addressing women, peace and security, counter-terrorism, and countering violent extremism, while ensuring that gender concerns were mainstreamed throughout.² Jordan’s efforts to create a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent

resolutions, therefore, should have a critical focus on issues related to terrorism and violent extremism.

This study aims to understand how women and men define “radicalization” and “violent extremism” in Jordanian communities and examine their attitudes and behavior regarding the phenomena. The focus was on examining radicalization among Jordanians and not among refugee communities. The study aims to evaluate whether or not there is a risk of radicalization for women and girls in Jordan and whether or not there are different “push and pull” factors for women and girls versus men and boys. The research also focused on understanding whether or not women’s places in their communities give them a unique position to observe or take part in either the radicalization or deradicalization process. It also aims to evaluate whether or not ongoing or planned deradicalization efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations targeting Jordan are gender sensitive.

To achieve those research objectives, the research conducted for this study attempted to answer four research questions:

1. Do women and men believe there is a problem with “radicalization” in their communities? What are the different ways that someone could be thought of as radicalized (other than going to join an armed jihadist group)? Do women and men view radicalization differently? How do they define radicalization?
2. Are any women and girls in Jordan at risk of or going through a process of radicalization? If so, what

1 GNRD News 2014.

2 UNSCR Resolution 2122 (2013), S/RES/2122; UNSCR Resolution 2422 (2015), S/RES/2422.

is the existing or potential impact on their everyday lives? In what ways is the process of radicalization (and the push and pull factors) different for women and girls versus men and boys? In what ways are they the same (taking into account voluntary and coercive measures)? Is there any evidence of men and women being trafficked out of Jordan as a result of radicalization efforts (e.g., to go into Syria)?

3. Do women occupy positions in their communities that enable them to get a closer look at the radicalization and deradicalization processes for men or women?
 - What roles do women play, or could they play, in the radicalization process (of women or men) in Jordan?
 - What roles do women play in the deradicalization process in Jordan? Is there potential for women to intervene?
4. Are current efforts at deradicalization in Jordan properly taking gendered concerns into account? If so, in what manner? If not, how could we encourage that? How could we encourage and increase the role of women in the deradicalization process?

To address these questions, the research utilized data obtained through interviews and a focus group discussion. The findings include quantitative data, qualitative data, relevant anecdotes and analysis to help understand the respondents' insights. Based on the findings, this study presents clear policy and programmatic recommendations to ensure gender-sensitive analysis and programming related to radicalization in Jordan that would benefit the country's creation of a National Action Plan.

Methodology

The study incorporated three main tools: a literature review, a series of 47 semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion.

The literature review involved a wide-ranging review of research that had been conducted on issues related to women and violent radicalization around the world. As there is no unified field of research on women and radicalization, the literature review covered writings on: women, peace, and security; terrorism; and

preventing and countering violent extremism. The literature review provided the backdrop to frame the field research conducted in Jordan.

The semi-structured interviews used open-ended questions in order to gather information about the current situation in Jordan from different target groups at the grassroots and national level, as well as from government figures and international experts. For each interview, the researchers engaged in a conversation with the interviewee, using a set of guiding questions to direct the discussion. Through the semi-structured interviews, the researchers were able to hear from a diverse set of stakeholders, including many whose voices might otherwise not be heard on this issue. These interviews were held in private and safe settings, so that interviewees could speak safely and candidly about sensitive issues.³

To summarize the research findings, responses were categorized into two groups of interviewees that were not mutually exclusive. They are defined as follows so that the terms are clear throughout the research findings:

- The term “respondents” includes 39 respondents: women in rural and urban areas (6), men in rural and urban areas (6), women activists in Amman and at the grassroots level (10), women in leadership positions (3), women from religious minorities (3), a relative of one victim who joined a radical group (1), and university students (10).
- The term “parents” includes 28 respondents: women in rural and urban areas (6), men in rural and urban areas (6), women activists in Amman and at the grassroots level (10), women in leadership positions (3), and women from religious minorities (3).

When relevant, responses were also sometimes categorized in terms of the respondents' position, such as university student, expert or government official.

The focus group discussion was held with representatives from 11 local civil society organizations (CSOs) that work on issues relevant to deradicalization in Jordan. The researchers moderated the session, asking

3 All respondents were Jordanian citizens, with the exception of two of the five experts consulted

guiding questions to lead the discussion while providing space for the participants to discuss among themselves and share ideas. A separate questionnaire was developed for this group.

Challenges and limitations

This study was limited by a tight timeline. Moreover, while the researchers initially intended to meet with victims of violent radicalization or the families of victims, efforts to do so proved more difficult than anticipated and yielded only one respondent. While the researchers identified multiple potential respondents through their local networks, almost all of them refused to be interviewed for the purpose of this research, as a result of fears and security restrictions. Moreover, due to the short timeline, the researchers were unable to hold a second focus group with women *Imams*, or *Wa'edaat*.

While the research from this study provides important insights and helpful anecdotes on the lives of women and men in Jordan and their relationship to the phenomenon of radicalization, there is a need for more grassroots research of this type to add texture and depth to the knowledge on the topic. Regarding the quantitative data, while the overall number of respondents was large enough to indicate qualitative trends, in most cases it was not large enough to yield statistically significant insights about the broader population that could be generalized. This report however, expresses some of its results as percentages only when the number of respondents is more than 20; this is done for ease of analysis of the fieldwork presented here.

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