

never knew if the rocket would hit them or their loved ones. Studies have shown the terrible effects these rocket attacks have had on the psychological health of these Israeli families,<sup>2,3</sup> but the level of intimate-partner violence of these families never approached the level of violence within Palestinian Arab families.

Clark and colleagues do not mention the fundamental role of Palestinian cultural and religious attitudes to female subservience and the wickedness of the non-believer in causing intimate-partner violence. They also argue that poverty resulting from movement restrictions imposed by Israelis is a cause of domestic violence among Palestinian Arabs, but do not explain why such poverty would have more of an effect than daily rocket attacks. Finally, Clark and colleagues fail to explain why they sought and received funding for their research from such an impoverished society.

I declare that I have no conflicts of interest.

**Gamaliel Isaac**

**isaacgam@uphs.upenn.edu**

Department of Radiology, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA

- 1 Clark CJ, Everson-Rose SA, Suglia SF, Btoush R, Alonso A, Haj-Yahia MM. Association between exposure to political violence and intimate-partner violence in the occupied Palestinian territory: a cross-sectional study. *Lancet* 2010; **375**: 310–16.
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The study by Cari Jo Clark and colleagues<sup>1</sup> is more propaganda than science. For example, Clark and colleagues write: "Occupation policies... affect family connectedness, depriving women of regular contact with their families who might otherwise intervene to prevent intimate-partner violence." On the contrary. Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim families very often do not intervene

when a husband is beating a wife. Both the husband's family and the wife's own family view this as a husband's right or as a wife's fault.

The study has many other weaknesses. First, Clark and colleagues focus only on violence among married couples and omit routine violence against daughters and sisters, including honour killings, even though a 2008 study that specifically addressed honour killings among Palestinians was available.<sup>2</sup> Second, they established no baseline, and had no control group in terms of intimate-partner violence in the Arab Middle East where there is no Israeli occupation (eg, in Jordan, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia). Third, Clark and colleagues do not acknowledge that, in shame and honour societies, surveys and statistics about domestic violence are unreliable since women are punished for reporting it. Fourth, they do not attempt to measure intimate-partner violence in Sderot, Israel, where civilians have endured 8000 rocket attacks from Gaza. Finally, they do not factor in the effect of Gaza being "occupied" by an increasingly fundamentalist Hamas and the fateful consequences for women, which include forced veiling and child arranged marriages.

Thus, the study attempts to blame Israel for the indigenous violence against women that is a feature of Arab and Muslim societies, especially today, when they have been radically fundamentalised.

I declare that I have no conflicts of interest.

**Phyllis Chesler**

**pchesler@phyllis-chesler.com**

c/o Bender and Rosenthal, Esq, 451 Park Avenue South, New York City, NY 10016, USA

- 1 Clark CJ, Everson-Rose SA, Suglia SF, Btoush R, Alonso A, Haj-Yahia MM. Association between exposure to political violence and intimate-partner violence in the occupied Palestinian territory: a cross-sectional study. *Lancet* 2010; **375**: 310–16.
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Although Cari Jo Clark and colleagues<sup>1</sup> show a statistical association between increased intimate-partner violence and exposure to collective violence in the West Bank and Gaza, other conclusions are contradicted by their results.

Clark and colleagues assessed exposure to violence during 2005 among Palestinian Arabs in the Israeli-administered territories. There was no quantification of the severity, duration, or recurrence of alleged exposures. Positive determination of husbands' exposure required only one incident of being insulted, cursed, detained, hit, wounded, or made a fugitive at any time during the year.

Despite Clark and colleagues' observation that "humiliation... takes place frequently" in the disputed territories, just 8% of husbands had exposure to violence by their criteria. 20% of families, which included any one of the children, or the husband or wife's siblings or parents, had someone exposed to violence, most commonly a house break-in.

Men prone to domestic abuse might be more likely to have negative interactions with soldiers or other Israelis. But, despite more than 40 years of Israeli administration, the incidence of husbands alleged as recipients of Israeli-inflicted violence or indignities was far less than children's reported exposure to violence in urban neighbourhoods.<sup>2</sup>

The incidence of sexual intimate-partner violence was only 13% and physical intimate-partner violence 10% among the wives of husbands who experienced defined violence—a statistically higher figure than for men not exposed to such violence, but also a small minority.

These results show that Israel's administration is far more benign than concluded by Clark and colleagues and that Palestinian society is coping remarkably well with external and internal violence—cause for optimism that a peaceful solution may yet be found.

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