

# Violence Against Women: Decolonizing Honor Killings

Fiona Kelly-Miller & Dr. Enaya Othman

## Introduction

- Term honor killings first used by Leiden Ane Nauta in 1978, but many scholars disagree with using the term because of its controversial implications
- I choose to compare the practice of honor killings in Palestine to the crimes of passion defense used in the U.S. because of their similarities, despite their differences in terminology and location
- Many societies and the press have continually used the term honor killings only in reference to certain populations' involvement in these types of crimes, specifically Arab and Muslim communities

## Significance

- The term honor killings is used to further demonize and alienate populations and communities globally
- Important to recognize and reshape our thinking on why we use different terminologies for these crimes to decolonize our thinking

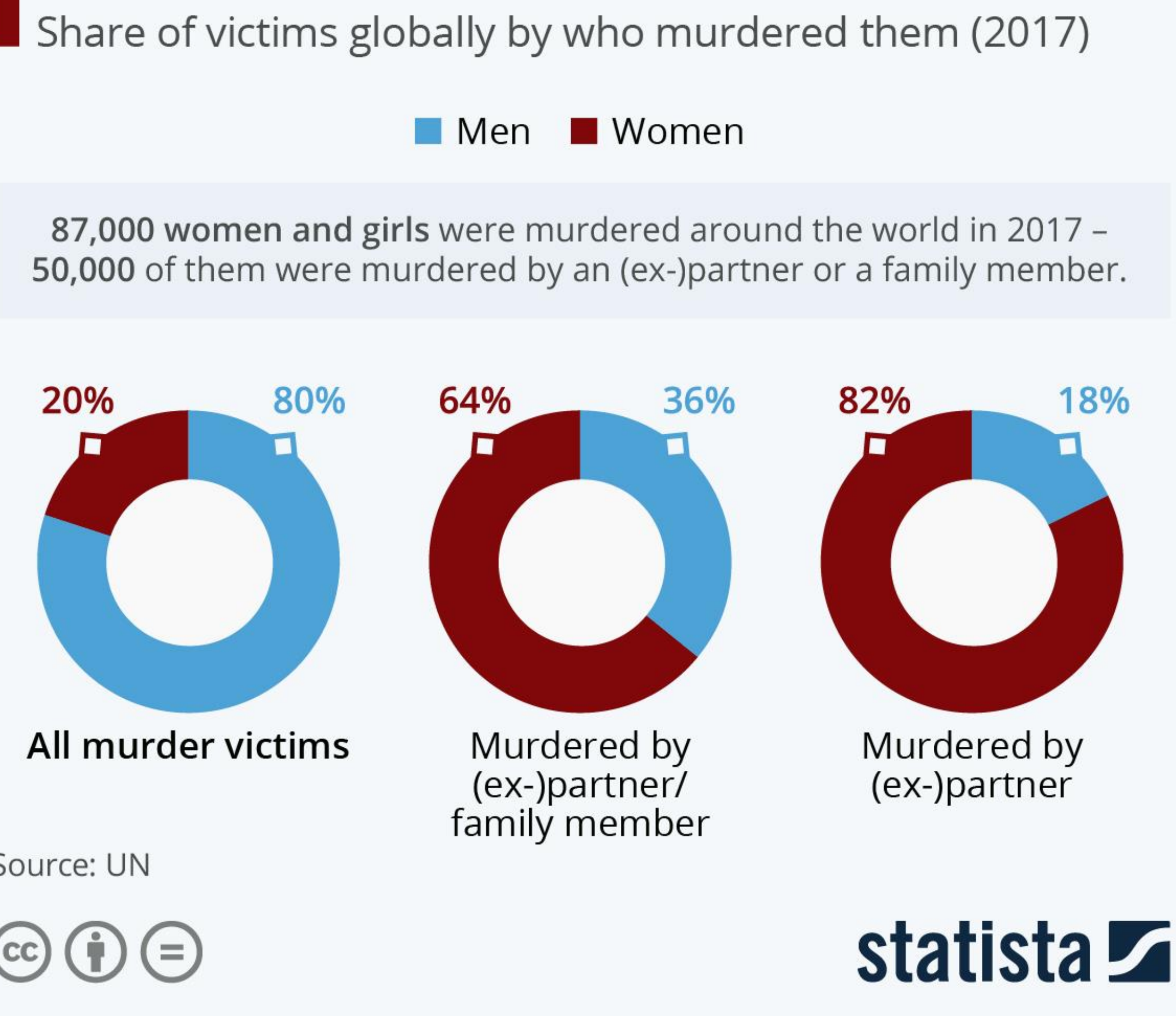
According to the nonprofit organization Violence Policy Center, 94% of female murder victims in U.S. were murdered by a known male relative or acquaintance (Iftikhar, 2016)

Organizations have reported **5,000-20,000 honor killings each year** worldwide (Basu 2021), however, underestimates due to lack of reporting

Protests after death of Israa Ghrayeb, a Palestinian women allegedly killed by her family in July 2019. Above is a photo from a protest in Ramallah, Palestine in September 2019, other protest signs read: "We are all Israa" and "My body is my property." Her death sparked a viral social media campaign using #JusticeforIrsaa. (Baroud 2019)



## Women More Likely to be Killed by Partners or Relatives



A common trend in the practice of honor killings and crimes of passion cases is the relationship between the victim and perpetrator (s) since this relationship, whether a relative or partner, is essential to the concept of honor that plays a role in both forms of violence against women. (Buchholz 2020)

Representing the United Nations statistics on the practice of honor killings worldwide, however, reflects the idea produced in many media and news sources that the term honor killings are used for certain populations, including Arabic and Muslim communities, immigrant communities, and other racial and religious minority groups worldwide. (Kiener 2011)



## Thesis

- Arguing that these crimes, while culturally, historically, and geographically distant from one another, share universal patriarchal values that socially normalize violence against women

## Methods

- Comparative study through laws in both countries and case studies
- Using historical and feminist perspectives to show similarities and differences between two forms of violence, including in common origins in laws
- Statistics to discuss the frequency of crimes in societies
- Building on past literature on honor killings and crimes of passion, including theories by Victoria Nourse that perpetrators of these crimes usually target females
- Analyzing the leniency allowed in laws for violence against women, since there are laws both in Palestine and the U.S. allowing for lighter sentencing or no punishment if a person is convicted of killing someone under certain circumstances

## Major Points to Support Argument

- Recent cases in both countries, including the case of Israa Ghrayeb (killed by family members in July 2019) and case lead to increased awareness of violence against women through protests and social media campaign

## Conclusion

- Developing recommendations based on current trends and activism occurring internationally on how to decrease the frequency of violence against women through identifying cultural norms that maintain patriarchal systems of repression and changing criminal justice laws on honor killings and crimes of passion

## Acknowledgements

- Led by faculty mentor Dr. Enaya Othman with the MU4Gold Scholars Research Program