



The Role of Security Media and Policing in Protecting Societally Vulnerable Groups

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Abstract:

This research paper examines the key police mechanisms used to protect vulnerable groups, emphasizing the importance of community security. These mechanisms include partnerships with society, security media, and patrols. They aim to increase rapprochement between the police institution and various groups, fostering communication. Laws were developed to implement these mechanisms, particularly in response to rising crime rates, particularly towards vulnerable groups. These mechanisms are crucial in international, regional, and national policies and legislation.

Keywords: *Police work; Socially vulnerable groups; Partnership with the community; Security media; Police patrols.*

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I. Introduction

The causes and opportunities for committing crime vary according to the environment in which they are found. Habitual criminals often commit crimes based on numerous opportunities, including the victim's ability to defend themselves. An individual's likelihood of being victimized increases according to their constitution (physiological and psychological). Of particular note here are societally vulnerable groups, which are defined as a group of individuals who are less able to cope with their surrounding circumstances due to a number of factors. Many segments of society fall into this category; these groups differ according to the social context in which they are found. In Algeria for example, societally vulnerable groups are classified into four categories: children, the elderly, the disabled, and women.

Like countries around the world, Algeria seeks to protect members of society from various forms of crime and assault, especially if this type of crime affects the most vulnerable social groups. Statistics presented by the Algerian police department for 2021 indicate that there were 17,000 phone calls related to reporting incidents of abduction, assault, battery and more against minor children. Additionally, 952 children were in danger, and 893 children were returned to their homes during the first four months of 2021. The statistics bureau also pointed to 2,450 victims of violence, including 1,035 children who were subjected to beating and injury, and 1,750 children involved in criminal cases. A representative of the National Gendarmerie also revealed that the number of battered women reached 12,331 cases of violence against women (Ajjaj, 2021) .

As necessitated, Algerian security services have recently adopted a new security policy consisting of establishing special police units to combat violations targeting societally vulnerable groups. The prominent feature of these police units is the adoption of a methodology based on intensifying contact, with the latter playing a major role in protecting societally vulnerable groups. Based on the above, we raise the following question: What are the most important mechanisms of the Algerian police in protecting societally vulnerable groups?.

II. Study Plan:

- First element: Presentation of the types of societally vulnerable groups and the various abuses committed against them.

- Second element: Definition, emergence, and operating mechanisms of the Unit for the Protection of Societally Vulnerable Groups .

- Third element: Sociological analysis of the work of the services for the protection of societally vulnerable groups.

III. Study Objectives:

- Categorize societally vulnerable groups, and mention the various dangers and abuses they are subjected to.

- Mention the most important mechanisms used by the Algerian police to protect societally vulnerable groups.

- Sociological analysis of police work in the field of protecting societally vulnerable groups.

A) Types of societally vulnerable groups and the various abuses committed against them :

1. The first category - persons with disabilities :

1.1. Definition of persons with disabilities:

Persons with disabilities are defined as those suffering from permanent impairments, whether physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory, that may prevent them from fully participating in society. Estimates indicate that there are more than two billion people worldwide living with some form of disability. According to the 2023 World Disability Survey, persons with disabilities account for about 16% of the world's population. (United Nations, 2023).

1.2. Common abuses against persons with disabilities:

1.2.1 Psychological and social abuse :

a. Social discrimination:

Refers to any exclusion on the basis of disability with the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field .

b. Social exclusion:

Refers to a state in which individuals, due to their economic, health or psychological conditions, are unable to fully and effectively participate in all aspects of life. (UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2019, p. 09).

a. Social marginalization:

Defined as a form of social seclusion that arises from some groups securing gains, spoils and interests that require a degree of protection by ensuring a distinguished position at the expense of subjugating another group, consequently weakening it, diminishing its interests, or distorting its identity to the extent of oppression and disfigurement (Ibrahim & Al-Obaidi, 2018, p .14).

1.2.2 Physical abuse :

a. Violence:

Disability is sometimes not seen as a form of adaptation, and thus persons with disabilities may face rejection in the form of various physical abuses by some individuals. The most notable of these behaviors is violence, defined as conduct tainted with aggression, coercion and compulsion. It is usually conduct far removed from cultivation and civilization, with aggressive motivations and energies explicitly exploited through acts like battery, manslaughter, vandalism, and using force to subjugate and dominate an opponent. Violence can be individual or collective. (Benziane, 2020, p.02).

b. Sterilization:

Approximately three thousand women underwent sterilization between 1928 and 1972. The Mosby dictionary defines sterilization as a process or act that makes a person unable to reproduce. Forced sterilization occurs when a person is sterilized without their consent or knowledge, without being given the chance to provide prior informed consent. The rate of this procedure against girls with disabilities increases for multiple reasons, including eugenics, regulating menstruation, and preventing pregnancy. Forms of this procedure include administering contraceptives; inserting or planting coils in the uterus. Additionally, there are some worrying practices such as surgical procedures including

hysterectomies and relying on estrogen treatments to hinder the growth of girls with disabilities. (United Nations, 2017).

c. Self-harm (euthanasia):

Ending the life of a terminally ill or disabled patient to relieve their unbearable pain based on their explicit request or the request of their legal proxy, carried out by a physician or other person out of compassion. Many countries have moved to legally allow this form of killing, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Canada and the United States. Approximately 25,000 people were euthanized between 2002 and 2019. (Véronique & Marie, 2019,p.05).

1.2.2 Financial abuse:

Among the common forms of abuse is the crime of fraud, which entails deceiving the victim. Its rate increases against persons with disabilities who become enslaved due to their physiological and psychological circumstances. Legal regulations have stiffened the penalty for this crime when committed against persons with disabilities. (Al-Maliki & Al-Hammad, 2018, p. 121).

2 The second category :women

Women are classified among societally vulnerable groups, owing to the uniqueness that distinguishes them from men. Abuse against women remains one of the most widespread violations globally, with statistics indicating that 736 million women worldwide, approximately one in three, have fallen victim to physical or sexual violence.

2.1. Forms of abuse targeting women:

2.1.1Physical abuse: A group of acts that physically affect the safety of women. Physical abuse may include:

a. Beating:

Tangible acts against the woman's body, using various tools such as hands, feet, manufactured devices like canes, knives, etc. This in turn leaves marks on her body such as bruises, wounds, etc. (Hamada, p. 08.)

b. Surrogacy:

A practice whereby a woman agrees to become pregnant and give birth to a child for another person or couple, with the intention of handing over custody of the child upon birth. American law defines it as a contractual agreement whereby the natural or surrogate mother, in exchange for set fees, agrees to conceive a child through artificial insemination using the sperm of the intended natural father, carry the fetus, give birth, and terminate all parental rights after delivery. (Priya, 2018) Forms of surrogacy include:

- **Altruistic surrogacy:** Free surrogacy without compensation, whereby the biological mother does not receive any payment from the family taking custody of the child after birth .
- **Commercial surrogacy:** The pregnant mother receives financial compensation paid by the intended parents in exchange for conception, childbirth and delivery of the baby.

- **Traditional surrogacy:** Artificial insemination is used to impregnate the egg of the birth mother with the sperm of the intended father who will take custody of the child after birth .
- **Domestic surrogacy:** Surrogacy procedures arranged between the biological mother and the intended parents residing in the same country without crossing political borders.
- **International surrogacy:** The birth mother and intended parents reside in different countries of residence. (P, 2021.)

Surrogacy is considered a form of abuse against women, given that implanting multiple embryos at once hoping to ensure successful implantation, increases the risks of caesarean delivery, birth complications, and restricted fetal development. Many mothers have nearly lost their lives due to pregnancy complications and suffered from post-traumatic stress disorders .

c. Female genital mutilation (FGM):

The harming of female genitalia, which involves the partial or total removal of female genital organs for non-medical cultural reasons. Estimates indicate that over 125 million girls and women have undergone FGM procedures in 29 countries across Africa and the Middle East Forms of FGM include :

- **Clitoridectomy:** Partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive, erectile part of the female genitalia) and in rare cases, removal of only the prepuce (the fold surrounding the clitoris .(Excision: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and labia minora (small vaginal lips), together with excision of the labia majora (large external vaginal lips..)
- **Infibulation:** Narrowing the vaginal opening by creating a barrier seal via cutting then repositioning the inner or outer labia, with or without clitoral excision .
- **All other harmful procedures:** All other harmful procedures performed on female genitalia without medical justification, such as pricking, piercing, incising, scraping or cauterizing genitalia (Tantawy, 2006,pp. 16-17).

d. Sexual assault:

In this type of abuse, it is usually used to force a woman to have sexual contact with her, or to use sex to harm her, without her wishes. One in three women is subjected to sexual violence. Sexual assault may be verbal by word for word, the content of which constitutes a sexual violation of others' rights. And it may be visually by looking stowaway and voyeurism at other people's organs or forcing a person to cater to pornographic films, It may be in the form of incest, which is the sexual intercourse between members of the same family, such as having sex between the father and his daughter.

2.1.2 Psychological and social abuse:

It is an act of apostasy and psychological emotion of a woman without physical effects. It is a lack of respect and appreciation, as well as neglect, humiliation, ill-treatment, surveillance, suspicion and censure. In addition to exposing women's social roles, narrowing women's interaction with their outside world, and submitting to the wishes of others without taking into account their role within the social environment, this in turn affects their position within society, which appears in many forms, including denial of occasions and visiting relatives. (Hamada, p. 08).

3. The Third Category: Children

3.1. Definition of a Child: According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child refers to any human being under the age of eighteen years old. (Ahmed, 2006)

3.2. Types of Abuse Targeting Children

3.2.1 Sexual Exploitation: This encompasses various acts of abuse in different environments and relationships whereby the child suffers sexual abuse by a relative, caregiver at home, rape by a partner, coercion into selling sex in exchange for food, money or other services. UNICEF estimates that 1 in 10 girls aged 15-19 have been forced into sex during their lifetime. A review covering 217 studies showed that 1 in 8 children worldwide have suffered sexual abuse before reaching 18 years old. (UNICEF Child Protection Section, 2020)

3.2.2 Economic Exploitation of Children: Child labor is a widespread dangerous phenomenon, especially in poor countries. It refers to children engaged in difficult or unsuitable work, driven by poverty, for low or no wages. Since early 2020, around 160 million children are estimated to be in child labor globally. (Al Jazeera) Forms of child labor are divided into the following:

- All forms of slavery or similar practices like the sale, trafficking and forced labor of children.

- Using, procuring or offering a child for prostitution, production of pornography or pornographic performances.

- Using, procuring or offering a child for illicit activities, in particular for production and trafficking of drugs.

- Work which by its nature or the circumstances it is carried out is likely to harm children's health, safety or morals. (League of Arab States, 2019)

3.2.3 Other Types of Abuse Against Children:

- A child losing their parents and remaining without support.
- Exposing a child to neglect and homelessness, or a child falling victim to armed conflict.
- Infringing on their right to education.
- The inability of parents or caregivers to control their behavior.
- treatment, especially torture and assault on their physical integrity.

b) The Algerian Police Model in Protecting Socially Vulnerable Groups:

1. Definition and Establishment of the Protection Unit for Socially Vulnerable Groups:

Protecting socially vulnerable groups is a priority for the General Directorate of National Security, which harnesses all available means and places them at the disposal of its personnel. A police unit for protecting socially vulnerable groups was established on November 19, 2017 within the Eastern Judicial Police precinct located in Bab El Oued, which oversees 50 operational police brigades across the national territory. The tasks of the Protection Unit for Socially Vulnerable Groups include providing support through listening, strengthening reporting mechanisms and communication with security services, and providing all awareness-raising tools and media to promote methods of engaging with socially vulnerable groups.

2. Departments of the Protection Unit for Socially Vulnerable Groups:

2.1. Child Rights Protection Department:

Children are often the easiest targets for criminals, or even for neglect by family members in fulfilling their duties towards the child. This unit seeks to protect children through various field mechanisms including:

2.1.1 Daily monitoring and foot patrols towards specific locations like transport stations or parks, to prevent any assault against children.

2.1.2 Retrieving lost or homeless children, studying their case and returning them to their parents if conditions allow. (Algerie Presse Service, 2021)

Relying on updated investigation mechanisms if a child is the victim of a particular crime, including:

2.1.3 The Audio-Visual Recording Room Model:

These are interrogation rooms within security services concerned with protecting vulnerable groups, designed with special specifications like colorful décor and toys to provide the minor with a sense of safety.

2.1.4 Psychosocial Support During Investigation:

A psychologist is present alongside the police officer, guardian of the minor, within the interrogation room. Among the methods used are telling stories similar to the assault suffered by the child so that they feel safe and can freely recount details of the assault. (General Directorate of National Security, 2018)

2.2. Juvenile Delinquency Suppression Department:

Among the priorities of Algerian law is combating juvenile delinquency and protecting children from committing criminal behavior. The work of this department is limited to investigation procedures when a minor commits a crime until they are brought to justice, according to specific constitutional legal bases including:

- Investigation procedures cannot be conducted for a delinquent minor without notifying their guardian through all available means.

- The child must be provided with every method allowing them to contact their family.

- The minor must undergo medical examinations at the start and conclusion of the investigation.

- The minor's place of residence during investigation must be separate from those designated for adults.

2.3. Department Combating Violence Against Women:

This department aims to protect women from all forms of violence committed against them, owing to the specific nature of cases where women are party to them. This brigade carries out several tasks including guiding battered women on their rights, receiving complaints from battered women, and conducting specialized training for police officers so that battered women feel at ease when filing complaints. (Algerie Presse Service, 2021)

The work of departments protecting socially vulnerable groups operates within the framework of proactive, preemptive police prevention work, aiming to modernize traditional police work through the preceding points. The work of the Protection Unit for Socially Vulnerable Groups covers the following areas:

3. The Role of Media in Protecting Vulnerable Groups

3.1. Educating and Informing the Public about the Crime Problem: These are awareness-raising programs issued by the police's media and public relations unit, with three main objectives:

- Instilling a sense of responsibility and cooperation among citizens with police agencies.
- Supporting national efforts made towards crime prevention.
- Creating educational programs whereby certain crimes are simulated and shown on television, demonstrating key actions they could take if faced with a similar situation. (Assous, 1998, p. 126).

3.2. Issuing Bulletins on Crime Prevention Methods:

Providing the public with free information on measures that can be taken to prevent or reduce crime. These bulletins contained diverse articles on crime prevention such as types of crimes, their prevalence in certain areas, and other information related to perpetrators, their gathering places, and types of affected victims (Assous, 1998, p. 128).

3.3. Objectives of Using Media in Activities Related to Preventing Crime Against Vulnerable Groups:

- Deepening society's understanding of the nature of crimes targeting vulnerable groups and future methods to confront them.
- Initially enhancing individual awareness as preparation for a wider campaign aimed at changing their behavior.
- Harnessing media to provide citizens with information related to crimes against vulnerable groups.
- Ensuring accurate distribution of this information, avoiding exaggeration and preventing sympathy or admiration of criminals, while publishing deterrent punitive measures and emphasizing the difficulty of escaping punishment.
- Equipping citizens with procedures that may be followed to limit criminal activity targeting vulnerable groups, making them routine practices.
- Conducting journalistic investigations on the harms and negative impacts of crime on community members, as well as methods to prevent it. (Algerian Police Magazine, 2011, p. 66).

3.4. Contributions of Security Media in Protecting Vulnerable Groups:

3.4.1. Awareness and Outreach Campaigns:

In 2021, 1,925 radio episodes and 405 television episodes were recorded for the benefit of socially vulnerable groups, involving specialized staff. As for field activities, 3,670 were recorded covering all areas including schools, elderly care homes and facilities for the disabled. Examples include commemorating national days dedicated to these groups every year, preparing awareness programs including:

- Presenting all means mobilized by security services to support vulnerable groups in different areas of daily life.
- Field trips for children and people with disabilities to police stations.
- Training police staff in sign language to ensure they can listen and identify the concerns of vulnerable groups.

- Considering the circumstances of people with disabilities when constructing police stations.

- Accompanying juvenile detention institutions to educate minors on different risks that children may face. (Algerian Police Magazine, 2019, p. 11).

3.4.2. Publishing Magazines and Newspapers:

The police publish a periodical containing news and matters related to security issues and vulnerable groups, offering advice to those more prone to becoming victims in order to protect them. An example is the Police Magazine, one of the most important publications of the Algerian police, allowing readers to benefit from diverse guidance on reporting crimes or mechanisms to prevent and protect vulnerable groups.

3.4.3. Green Lines and Electronic Applications:

With developments in information technology, Algerian police services have kept pace with these advancements concerning protecting vulnerable groups. Numerous electronic applications and green lines have been introduced for optimal response to reports received by these services. These include:

a. Green Lines:

Recently, the Algerian police have developed a new communications system of “green lines” to facilitate reporting by citizens. Green number 104, known as the national emergency plan for reporting missing minors launched on November 20, 2016. The communications unit operating under green number 104 follows specific procedures when receiving a report of a missing minor:

- Upon receiving the call, the officer reassures and provides psychosocial support to the reporter.

- The officer tries to gather information about the minor (clothes, place last seen, age, appearance).

- The officer informs the security services in the relevant area to immediately begin search patrols for the minor.

- If the minor is not found within 24 hours, a national bulletin is issued to all other security services to search for them. (General Directorate of National Security, 2018).

b. Electronic Applications:

The “Elou Police” app is a smart application allowing citizens to report crimes via mobile phone. The advantage of this app is enabling citizens to document assault cases against victims through photos, videos or audio recordings and instantly send them to police services.

1. Community Partnership:

Police forces responsible for protecting vulnerable groups operate based on the principle of engaging all sections of society in security issues, bridging the gap between the police and the public. Countering crime is no longer solely the responsibility of state security bodies, rather citizens have become integral to the security equation. This partnership may be implemented through several principles:

1.1. Community Patrols:

Making all community members carry out police duties in their communities in coordination with actual police. This is a new concept rejecting the idea of formalized police work, turning it into semi-formal work via participation. Meaning introducing modifications to traditional police work focused narrowly on enforcing laws, to become a service-providing function that provides citizens with the ingredients of comprehensive security. (Berrardi, 2012, p. 7)

1.2. Neighborhood Coverage:

Its crucial role is embodied in the field activities of police services, especially neighborhood police working to enhance security presence on the ground and meeting security and regulatory needs among the general public. Relying on trust and credibility while expanding the scope of security coverage, enhancing citizens' sense of security, and reducing crime.

1.3. The Listening and Prevention Unit:

This is a unit located in the provincial security directorates, working to get closer to citizens and communicate with different groups in society, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and in particular those more prone to becoming victims of criminals and delinquents. It does this by bringing police services closer and encouraging people to contact the nearest police station to their place of residence. (Police Magazine, 2011, p. 46).

IV. Conclusion:

The significance of police work in securing helpless social bunches cannot be denied, but this work still endures from insufficiencies as the rate of attacks on these bunches remains tall. Numerous nations, counting Algeria, work to create elective and overhauled security plans to be included as needs in police work. These security plans comprise of preventive police work, as anticipation is the foremost viable approach for securing defenseless social bunches. To really actualize preventive work, a few contemplations must be made, counting working to get it the preventive policing approach in ensuring defenseless bunches, clarifying the dreams of both police officers and citizens, as well as collaborating with formal and casual societal teach to strengthen the concept of security inside the community. Outstandingly, for the victory of this security arrange it must be built steadily, coming to viability inside the social environment.

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