



Policy paper:

The Impact of Decree-Law No. 21 of 2025 on E-Commerce on Women Entrepreneurs

**July
2026**

Executive Summary

Decree-Law No. (21) of 2025 on E-Commerce is the first standalone Palestinian legislation dedicated to regulating e-commerce. The Palestinian Businesswomen's Association – ASALA prepared this policy paper as part of an advocacy campaign supported by the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). The paper examines how the new law may affect women-owned micro and small businesses and proposes policy recommendations to ensure that its implementation supports, rather than limits, the sustainability and growth of these businesses.

The paper is based on a mixed-method research approach. It included a survey of 36 women business owners, three focus group discussions held in Hebron, Ramallah, and online via Zoom with a total of 40 participants, as well as consultations with stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The research also included a comparative legal review of regional and international experiences, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, China, and the European Union, alongside UNCTAD's 2023 gender-responsive e-commerce standards. Data collection took place during May and June 2026.

The findings highlight several challenges facing women entrepreneurs. Around 67% of surveyed women—approximately 24 out of 36—operate without any formal registration, while 61%, or around 22 participants, had not heard about the new law before taking part in the survey. Around 89% rely on cash as their main or only payment method, and 53% operate their businesses from home.

The findings also reveal considerable concern and uncertainty about the law's requirements. About 58% of respondents believe that the requirements will affect micro and small businesses, while another 33% said they might. More importantly, 14% are considering leaving the market altogether, while 33% expect to increase their prices to cover the costs of complying with the law.

One of the main policy concerns is that while the law is gender-neutral in its wording, its impact may not be gender-neutral in practice. None of its 28 articles explicitly refers to women or women-owned businesses. At the

same time, the law generally applies the same registration requirements to individuals and legal entities without establishing clear thresholds or exemptions based on the size or nature of the business. As a result, a small home-based business may face requirements that are disproportionately burdensome compared with those faced by larger commercial platforms. The comparative analysis of experiences from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, China, Jordan, and the European Union, together with UNCTAD's 2023 standards, points to three areas where the Palestinian framework could be strengthened: ensuring that compliance requirements are proportionate to the size and nature of the business, introducing positive incentives that encourage voluntary formalization, and integrating a gender perspective into the law's objectives and implementation mechanisms.

Based on these findings, the paper recommends practical measures to make compliance more accessible for women-owned micro and small businesses. These include simplifying registration procedures, providing ready-to-use forms and templates, increasing awareness of the law and its requirements, and improving access to electronic payment methods. Beyond these immediate measures, the paper also highlights a broader strategic priority: creating the political and institutional conditions needed for Palestinian products to access international digital platforms and markets. Domestic legal compliance alone will have limited value if it does not translate into real opportunities for businesses to reach new customers and markets.

There is still an opportunity to shape how the law works in practice. Although the E-Commerce Registry Regulation has already been issued, detailed instructions and practical tools are still needed to guide small businesses through the compliance process. The purpose of this paper is therefore not to challenge or delay the law, but to encourage smarter use of the available implementation mechanisms so that the new framework becomes an opportunity for women entrepreneurs rather than an additional barrier.

Ensuring women's meaningful participation in the digital economy is essential to building an inclusive, sustainable, and competitive Palestinian digital economy.