

December, 10 2007  
Press Release

## On the Occasion of the "International Human Rights Day"

### The world turns their back to the Palestinian rights

Today marks the 59th anniversary of the International Human Rights Day. It is the day the UN declared the issuance of the "International Declarations of Human Rights" to put new international foundations for enforcing and respecting the sacred life and dignity of human beings. It might be a co-incidence for the birth of this declaration with the anniversary of the Palestinian uprooting in 1948, still experienced by Palestinians up until today.

This occasion comes as Palestine and the whole region are immersed in continuing incidents of violence, political instability, and violations of human rights. Palestinian people are witnessing tremendous violations to their rights. Israel persisted to use the policies of political assassinations, targeting innocent civilians and objects, confiscating land, uprooting trees, demolishing homes, and preventing citizens from using their natural resources such as land, water, and fishing wealth. Moreover, Israel has continued tightening checkpoints, building the separation wall in the West Bank as well as tightening strict political and economical siege as well as partitioning the whole OPT and restricting freedom of movement.

In an unprecedented action, Israel has prevented all Palestinian citizens in Gaza Strip of movement, including patients (except a very few number of critical cases), students, businessmen, and families. This prevention of goods and basic raw materials has led to paralysis in all aspects of life, and almost entire collapse of the Palestinian economy, as well as serious rise in the poverty rate to about 80%, and unemployment rate into more than 70%. Such situation led to dangerous humanitarian and psychological repercussions.

Also, in another escalating action and in continuation of Israeli assaults and strangulation, Israel has declared Gaza Strip as enemy entity, disturbed the provision of electricity, water, and fuels to Gaza Strip. This is in addition to imposing more restrictions on the movement of goods and individuals through all crossings, and restrictions on flow of money. Furthermore, the siege that was imposed on the Gaza Strip has created excessive loss and damage in the different aspects of Palestinian life.

For the industrial and agricultural sectors, preventing the import of raw materials essential for Gaza agriculture and industry, and the export of final goods, resulted in the shut down of many manufacturing and agricultural businesses with significant losses in both industries. According to the Palestinian Private Sector Coordination Council (PSCC), the current restrictions have led to the suspension of 90% of Gaza's industrial operations.

The restrictions has impacted the health sector directly as there is significant shortages in certain drugs and medical services. Moreover, there are more than 900 critical cases (fighting death) which need immediate intervention and treatment abroad due to lack of medical services available in Gaza; where 32 cases of whom died so far.

The educational system in Gaza has also been affected by the siege. With the start of the new school year, there has been a serious lack of books and a shortage of the raw materials needed for printing. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), one third of the students started the school year without the needed text books. The

closures also deprived thousands of students from reaching their universities outside the Gaza Strip.

All such measures lead to impoverishment of Palestinian people through systematic policies of deprivation of resources including; natural resources and developmental and humanitarian assistance provided to Palestinians by the international community.

As a result, the Palestinian environment today is a combination of deprivation, poverty, feelings of anger, frustration, hopelessness, feelings of powerlessness and despair. Such atmosphere leaves serious mental consequences on the Palestinian people. Such feelings will inevitably lead to further anger which will eventually develop into more violence and defiance. Furthermore, the psychological suffering is reflected in the high levels of domestic, tribal, and community violence in general.

Additionally, the results of the research studies reveal the correlation between violence and siege with its traumatizing impacts on the negative behavior of children and their thinking in terms of social and political peace. Palestinians children are suffering from feelings of abandonment and neglect as a result of the inability of their parents to fulfill their basic needs, including providing basic needs of food and security. In addition, the feelings of resentment, oppression, defiance, and extremism will leave catastrophic scars on the psychological profile of the next Palestinian generation. As a result, extremism as ideologies will construct the major aspect of the mental schemata for the coming Palestinian generation. This will impact the Palestinian society internally, and will impact the political atmosphere in the whole region, endangering the possibilities of peace and security; which will eventually leave Palestinians with no hope in genuine peace, and gaining their freedom and other legitimate rights.

Gaza Community Mental Health Programme warns against the serious impacts of the continuation of these condition that, if does continue, will lead to severe and dangerous deterioration in the mental health among the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip in particular and in Palestine in general. We, at Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, call on the international community and human rights organizations to immediately intervene in order to pressure Israel to stop implementing its plan of strangulating Gaza Strip. Such action, if happen, will aggregate the Palestinian humanitarian sufferings and will lead to more political and security deterioration in the region and the world.

On the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, we, call upon the international community, especially the signatories of the 4th Geneva Convention, and human rights organizations to fulfill their responsibilities and urge all countries to respect articles of international law. Significantly, we, urgently appeal to the international community to rescue and protect Palestinians and to break the imposed siege on Palestinian people. We, also, urge them to pressure Israel to prevent its continued violations of Palestinian human rights with all of its forms, and to urgently act on lifting the siege imposed on the Palestinian People.

Gaza Community Mental Health Programme