



## Statement

### **Realizing Palestinian working women's Right to Social Protection is the basis of reinforcing Resilience**

The Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD) congratulates all workers on the special occasion of International Workers' Day, also known as May Day. PWWSD also wishes to express the utmost respect and admiration to all the front-line medical workers currently confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, PWWSD declares itself in alliance with workers' rights as stipulated by international workers' rights and the standards of the International Labour Organization.

This year's International Workers' Day comes in the midst of the deadly COVID-19 crisis that has so negatively impacted the security and safety of millions of people, killing hundreds of thousands and resulting in a global economic crisis whereby millions have been left unemployed and in poverty. This pandemic has also exacerbated previously existing inequalities and injustices and exposed the extent of exploitation under neoliberal capitalist globalization and its policies. These policies have worked to deepen racism and repressed the right to social protection and health care through systematic environmental destruction and a monopoly on the global economy and politics. As a result, class divides, colonialism, militarization, and economic sanctions have all been deepened. The World Bank and the World Trade Organization working as the tools of globalization have hindered the ability of the people of the Global South to truly confront this crisis. Instead, these organizations continue to impose conditions of economic restructuring on their governments that will only increase the indebtedness of these countries, raise poverty rates, and promote austerity policies that will disproportionately impact workers, farmers, and middle-class men and women.

For centuries, International Workers' Day has been rooted in solidarity, struggle, and marches for social justice, equality, and the dignity of the working class all over the world. This day will remain an inspiration across generations to confront the artificiality of global imperialist slogans of "people first" shrouded in goals of sustainable development; this rhetoric contradicts the reality of people denied the rights to security and protection and instead condemned to death and disease under a weakened health infrastructure. Instead, perhaps the main message of today should be to build unity and solidarity towards social justice through a global struggle against fascism, capitalist domination, and American imperialism which threatens the freedom and dignity of people all over the world.

Within this global context, the Israeli occupation is increasing its oppressive measures in order to impose the so-called "Deal of the Century" which seeks to undermine the right of the Palestinian people to freedom and self-determination. Recent photos showing Palestinian workers being "dumped" at military checkpoints by Israeli soldiers on the basis that they might have been infected with COVID-19 fully encompasses the despicable behaviour of the occupation in response to this crisis. Nevertheless, this dehumanizing abhorrent treatment of Palestinian workers is only the latest iteration of five decades of exploitation of these workers in the oPt absent any input from or accountability by the international community. This is tied in with the occupation's racial colonialist practices that seek to weaken the Palestinian economy and make it beholden to the Israeli economy. The occupation seeks to accomplish this in part by controlling and plundering Palestinian natural resources and through crushing tax measures as well as the Palestinian National Authority's adoption of neoliberal policies and granting of concessions to the private sector. This is part of a global push to reward the private sector at the expense of a social protection for works, in light of the lack of implementation of the National and Central Council decisions regarding labour stoppages per the Paris Protocol



and the absence of an emancipatory economic agreement reflected in the agricultural and economic budgets. This is in addition to the exposure of the working class to illness, including female workers who comprise up to 21% of the labour force. Women workers also tend to be concentrated in the informal sector under conditions that violate Palestinian labour law.

Meanwhile, data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics regarding the economy and the working class indicate steep losses and dire unemployment and poverty rates across the working class and impacting working women in particular. This is reflected in households headed by women; at 11% of households overall, they are poorer than households headed by men. Furthermore, domestic workers and those working in settlements, agriculture, settlements, kindergartens, day-cares, cooperatives, and small businesses have become increasingly vulnerable to poverty and destitution as a result of quarantine and lockdown measures.

We at the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development, as defenders of human rights and from our roots in the 1981 as a grassroots movement, join our voices with the voices of Palestinian workers for the implementation of the following demands:

- The passage of a social security law by an elected parliament on the basis of immediate national unity to ensure a relief package that guarantees decent work and a social safety net
- An obligation on behalf of the private sector, banks, monopolies and large corporations to withhold no less than 10% of their profits rather than their tax obligations to be allocated towards a social safety net to combat the effects of this pandemic
- The conducting of union elections absent any factionalism, to reinstate their role as financial supporters and defenders of workers' rights, and to increase the financial support of women leaders by no less than 40%
- Raising the minimum wage in accordance with the cost of living index by immediate decree and the penalization of anyone who violates this decree
- The formation of a national committee to mitigate the crisis and supervise the social support system
- The activation of an employment fund per national consensus with the participation of human rights organizations and workers delegates from formal and informal sectors
- Take steps to deter those taking advantage of the COVID-19 crisis in order to deny workers their rights in accordance with the 2000 Palestinian labour law
- The Palestinian Liberation Organization must delineate an emancipatory economic strategy and set up a social safety net to minimize the brutality of the free market economy

**occupied Palestine  
May Day 2020**