

24th of October 2023

Urgent Call to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians

We the undersigned Organizations and Networks working on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and on the Women's Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) urge the General Secretary of the United Nations and the Security Council member States convening this week to discuss the WPS Agenda to immediately take measures to stop the military aggression on the Gaza Strip, causing high casualties among civilians, especially women, and children, and to provide necessary protection to the civilian population of the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, we also call on the UNSC to stop obstructing the passage of draft resolutions for a humanitarian ceasefire and pass a resolution that ensures the provision of adequate humanitarian aid such as food, water, fuel, and medicine to the Gaza Strip through the passage of a resolution immediately. The UNSC should abide by its legal and moral responsibilities to maintain peace and security according to the UN Charter. This is the first and foremost legal responsibility of the UNSC; **If not NOW then WHEN?**

It has now been over two weeks since the Israeli military aggression on the Gaza strip, Israel employed indiscriminate, excessive, and disproportionate force in this densely populated besieged area, resulting in the killing of over 5930 people as of the 24th of October, 3:00 pm of whom 65% are women and children. Additionally, over 16,000 persons were injured or are missing under the rubble.

This is an act of genocide against innocent Palestinian civilians. This assertion is made in light of the fact that more than 47 families in Gaza have reportedly been entirely removed from the civil registry. The indiscriminate bombardment of thousands of Palestinian homes, hospitals, schools, mosques, and churches cannot be justified as self-defense. On the 10th of October, the military announced that the "emphasis is on damage, not precision" (Israeli Military Spokesperson), thereby declaring their total disregard for the rules of war and principles of international humanitarian law.

The tightening of the military siege on the Gaza Strip through the announcement of a complete cut-off of food, water, and electricity, and the starvation of a population of over two million is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a war crime. On October 9th, the Israeli Minister of Military Yoav Gallant announced the complete siege on the Gaza Strip and stated that Israel is “fighting human animals, and we will act accordingly,” thereby dehumanizing Palestinians and depriving them of their basic needs for survival. Three days later, most residents of the Gaza Strip reported that they no longer have access to drinking water. The Israeli military bombarded six water wells, three water pumping stations, one water reservoir, and one desalination plant that serves over 1.1 million people¹. This has led people to resort to unsafe water sources, risking their lives and increasing the vulnerability of the population to infectious disease outbreaks.

We would like in this regard bring your attention to the UNSC Resolution 2417 which strongly condemns international humanitarian law violations, such as the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, underlining that this act may constitute a war crime, and the unlawful denial of humanitarian access, depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival.

In addition to collective punishment and forcible transfer, over one million Palestinians have been ordered by the Israeli military to forcibly evacuate the northern part of the Gaza Strip and were instructed to move to the southern region using designated safe routes. Subsequently, these routes were targeted with military strikes according to our field researcher, resulting in the tragic loss of at least 70 lives, with a significant number being women and children. This evacuation has led to overcrowding in the southern parts of the Gaza Strip, exacerbating casualties with each subsequent bombing due to families residing together in large numbers while the Israeli bombardment and airstrikes targeted all parts of the Gaza Strip leaving no safe place for Palestinian civilians.

Women and girls have no access to comprehensive health services, UNFPA had estimated that there are over 50,000 pregnant women currently residing in the Gaza strip. 5,500 of them are anticipated to give birth. They not only lack access to safe medical reproductive

¹ <https://www.map.org.uk/landing-pages/gaza-emergency-situation-2023>

services and essential medical supplies, but, like all Gaza's civilians, also struggle to find shelter from bombings and access to food and water.²

WHO has denounced in its capacity as the United Nation's Health Agency, Israel's repeated directives to evacuate 22 hospitals in northern Gaza, where more than 2000 patients are currently under treatment. This enforced evacuation of patients and healthcare workers will exacerbate the existing humanitarian and public health crisis as the lives of numerous critically ill patients are endangered. Health facilities in northern Gaza are overwhelmed with an influx of injured patients, operating beyond their maximum capacity. Some patients are receiving treatment in hallways and makeshift outdoor spaces on nearby streets due to the shortage of hospital beds.³

Our Organizations are deeply horrified by the statements that were made by the Israeli government officials to dehumanize the Palestinian population. These statements demand your immediate intervention to prevent the unfolding of further war crimes and crimes against humanity currently committed in the Gaza Strip. Some elements of these crimes are already becoming apparent on the ground. We wish to alert you that actions such as the cut-off of water, food, electricity, and internet and the repeated bombing of the Rafah crossing, are all indicative of Israel taking concrete actions in line with their alarming genocidal statements. This is not to mention the escalating state violence and settler terrorism in the West Bank, since the seventh of October where 95 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military and settlers. The Israeli military occupation also expanded its night raids to all towns, villages, and refugee camps in the West Bank, and hundreds of Palestinians are being illegally arrested. The Complicity between the Israeli police and military with the settlers to vandalize, beat, and abuse Palestinian civilians in the different parts of the West Bank and Jerusalem is obvious and supported by evidence-based data.

²<https://www.unfpa.org/news/%E2%80%9Crace-against-death%E2%80%9D-amid-relentless-bombardment-gaza-pregnant-women-tell-unfpa>

³<https://www.emro.who.int/media/news/evacuation-orders-by-israel-to-hospitals-in-northern-gaza-are-a-death-sentence-for-the-sick-and-injured.html>

We the undersigned organizations and networks therefore call upon the UNSC member states to uphold their legal obligations to protect the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, and immediately take action toward ending the bloodshed, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and collective punishment against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip especially women and children, and towards strengthening implementation of UNSCR 2417 and promoting accountability:

- The UN Security Council to immediately convene to maintain peace and security and ensure protection for Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
- It is imperative for the member states to step in and put an end to the current Israeli military offensive. This intervention should ensure adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL), while also enabling unimpeded humanitarian access. This includes preventing attacks on vital civilian infrastructure essential for the distribution of humanitarian aid and safeguarding the operation of food systems and markets in conflict zones, as outlined in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2417.
- The UNSC should immediately take measures to end the Israeli prolonged colonial occupation and seek a just and durable solution where Palestinians are given their right to self-determination and their right to a Palestinian Sovereign State.
- We call on the UNSC to immediately take action and adopt a resolution for a humanitarian ceasefire to ensure the passage of adequate, sufficient humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. This should be done with respect to the dignity and well-being of innocent civilians.
- We call upon all UN Security Council members to acknowledge their responsibility in ending the impunity of Israel and prosecuting those accountable for acts of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, aligning with the principles outlined in Article (11) of UNSC Resolution 1325.

Finally, we call on the member states of the UNSC to translate their rhetoric and their own resolutions into concrete actions to protect Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Territory, especially in the Gaza Strip. We cannot take more of the continued double standards that we currently see in the international community and the complete disregard for International Law. All Member States are responsible for the indiscriminate and

disproportionate targeting of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and are accountable under common Articles (1), (146), and (147) of the Geneva Conventions to respect and ensure respect to rules and principles of international humanitarian law especially the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians in times of War and under occupation.

The Organizations & Networks;

1. Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)- Palestine.
2. Palestinian National Coalition on the Implementation of UNSCR (1325)- Palestine.
3. General Union of Palestinian Women- Palestine.
4. Arab States Civil Society Organizations and Feminists Network
5. Palestinian Forum to combat Violence against women (Al-Muntada)
6. Arab Women Union Society – Palestine
7. Arab Agronomists Association – Palestine
8. Arab Women Organization of Jordan – Jordan
9. Association Of Committees Of Social Work – Palestine
10. Association Lina Ben Mhenni – Tunisia
11. Association Free Handicap – Morocco
12. Association of the Egyptian Female Lawyers – Egypt
13. Association Assaida Al horra pour la citoyenneté et l'égalité des chances et - Morocco
14. Association Algerienne SOS Femmes en detresse- Algeria
15. Association Free Hands – Morocco
16. Association Assanaa Anissaiya – Morocco
17. Association Solidarité Féminine-Morocco
18. Al-Aman Center to shelter women victims of violence and their children- Tunisia
19. Al-Taqwa Association For Woman and Child Right- Iraq
20. Al-Najda Social Association- Palestine
21. AL Najadha Social Society for Palestinian Women Development– Palestine
22. Applied Research Institute ARIJ – Palestine
23. Alliance for Arab Women- Egypt
24. ABAAD– Resource Center for Gender Equality – Lebanon
25. Baghdad Women Association- Iraq
26. Besme Group for Humanitarian Assistance - Lebanon

27. Bisan Center for Research & Development- Palestine
28. Beity Association - Lebanon
29. Collective for Research & Training on Development (CRTDA) – Lebanon
30. Center for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights (Hurriyat)- Palestine
31. CALAM – Tunisia
32. Democracy and Citizenship Forum – Morocco
33. Dibeen For Environmental Development – Jordan
34. Donia for Sustainable Development - Lebanon
35. Edraak Foundation for Development & Equality- Egypt
36. El Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence – Egypt
37. Egyptian Foundation for Family Development – Egypt
38. Filastiniyat- Palestine
39. Family Defense Society – Palestine
40. Fédération of the League for Women's Rights (FLDF)- Morocco
41. Ganoubia Hora Organization- Egypt
42. Human Rights and Democracy Media Centers (SHAMS)- Palestine
43. Himaya Association for Protection Working Women against Violence and Sexual Abuse-
Palestine
44. HAWAA Organization for Relief and Development- Iraq
45. Health Work Committees – Palestine
46. Human Security Initiative Organization – Sudan
47. Iraq Women Network – Iraq
48. Jossour Women Moroccan Forum- Morocco
49. Jerusalem Legal Aid Center (JLAC) – Palestine
50. Jerusalem Center for Women – Palestine
51. Jerusalem NGOs Consortium- Palestine
52. Jousour Citizenship Association – Tunisia
53. Juzoor for Health and Social Development- Palestine
54. Khatwat Amal Association – Jordan
55. KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation – Lebanon
56. Libyan Women Platform for Peace (LWPP)- Libya
57. Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB)- Lebanon
58. Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) – Lebanon
59. Lebanon Creadel – Lebanon

60. Moroccan Association for Women's Rights – Morocco
61. Middle East and North Africa Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (MENAPPAC) – Lebanon
62. Moroccan Association to Combat Violence Against Women – Morocco
63. MUSAWA- The Palestinian Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession – Palestine
64. MAAHA Women's Rights Organization – Libya
65. Mother's School Society – Palestine
66. MenaFem Movement for Economic Development and Ecological Justice
67. Nobel Women's Initiative
68. Observatoire Marocain des Violences faites aux femmes- Morocco
69. Peace Track Initiative – Yemen
70. Peace Environment for Development – Yemen
71. Palestinian non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO)- Palestine
72. Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC) – Palestine
73. Palestinian Land Research Center - Palestine
74. Psycho Social Counseling Center For Women (PSCCW) – Palestine
75. QADER for Community Development – Palestine
76. QADIRAT Organization – Tunisia
77. Roaa Women Association – Jordan
78. Rural Women's Development Society (RWDS) – Palestine
79. Solidarity Is Global Institute (SIGI) – Jordan
80. Solidarity Association for Social and Cultural Development – Lebanon
81. Spotlight Center for Law & Human Rights – Lebanon
82. SAWA for Development Association – Lebanon
83. Stars of Hope – Palestine
84. The Palestinian Medical Relief Society- Palestine
85. The Palestinian Farmers Union – Palestine
86. The Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPA)- Palestine
87. The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women (LECORVAW)- Lebanon
88. The Palestinian Federation of Women's Action- Palestine
89. The Democratic Association of Women of Morocco- Morocco
90. The Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (PWWSD) – Palestine

91. The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (Miftah) – Palestine
92. The Voice of the Amazigh Women- Morocco
93. The Democracy and Workers Rights Center – Palestine
94. The Cultural Forum Center – Palestine
95. The Middle East Council of Churches – Lebanon
96. The Regional Coalition of WHRDS in the Middle East and North Africa
97. The Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance
98. Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
99. TASTAKEL Women Organization
100. Tafawuq Consulting Centre for Development – Bahrain
101. Tunisian Association for Democratic Women- Tunisia
102. Tunisian Human Rights League – Tunisia
103. Tamer Institute for Community Education – Palestine
104. Union de l’Action F’eministe (UAF)- Morocco
105. Union of Progressive Women – Lebanon
106. Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC)- Palestine
107. Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF)- Palestine
108. Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF)- Lebanon Section
109. Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF)- USA
110. Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF)- Spain
111. Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) International
112. Woman Helping Woman Network – Jordan
113. Women Alive Organization- Lebanon
114. Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) – Palestine
115. Women’s Studies Center – Palestine
116. Wefaq Society for Women and Child Care – Palestine
117. WARD Organization-Lebanon
118. Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) – Palestine.