

27 May 2021

UN Human Rights Council, 30th special session on the grave human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

Joint statement by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC)

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

WILPF and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) strongly support the creation of a Commission of Inquiry whose mandate addresses both the root causes of Israel's systemic discrimination and the violations of rights of Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line.

What is happening in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem is a result of the international community's failure to address the root causes of the systematic violence inflicted on Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel. As UN experts of this Council have stated, "the enemies of accountability are impunity and exceptionalism."¹ The impunity of Israel and the states which are complicit results in escalations of violence as witnessed the past few weeks. It must no longer be tolerated.

The apartheid settler colonial policies pursued by Israel result in crimes against human humanity and other violations of the human rights of Palestinians. The continued illegal annexation of Palestinian land, the systemic oppression and institutionalised discrimination, the bombing of populated areas, and other human rights violations have devastating impacts on the lives of Palestinians. Women and girls are differently impacted. They are disproportionately impacted by consequences of explosive weapons and forced displacements due to their roles as primary caregivers of their families and managers of household livelihoods.² Similarly, the 14-year-long blockade imposed on Gaza and the recurrent military offences against the enclave have resulted in a double burden on women.³ Such specific impacts must be investigated and addressed including through the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry the Council will establish. And the participation and voices of Palestinian women must be ensured.

It is unconscionable that States — including the USA, Germany, Italy, UK and Canada⁴ — still supply weapons and other military assistance to the Israeli government, despite the clear risk of serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

The Human Rights Council must:

- Ensure that gendered impacts are investigated and addressed;
- Recommend an immediate and comprehensive arms embargo;
- Urge all parties to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas;
- Strengthen its scrutiny of Israeli and foreign companies that continue to benefit from the occupation, such as those with business ties to Israeli settlements.

¹ *Gaza-Israel escalation: End violence now, then work to end occupation, say UN experts*, Statement by Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, Clément Voule , Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Morris Tidball-Binz, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, and Koumbou Boly Barry, Special Rapporteur on the right to education. Available at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=27102&LangID=E> .

² See, for example, *Palestinian Women Under Prolonged Israeli Occupation: The Gendered Impact of Occupation Violence*, Joint Submission to the UPR Working Group 29th Session (August 2017) by Community Action Center (CAC), The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA), Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Available at:

<https://www.wilpf.org/report-release-palestinian-women-under-prolonged-israeli-occupation-the-gendered-impact-of-occupation-violence/>

³ See, for example, *Palestinian Women: The Disproportionate Impact of The Israeli Occupation* (November 2018), by The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD), Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), Women Media and Development (TAM), and Karama. Available at:

<http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=26522&CategoryId=8>

⁴ See, for example, *Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2020*, SIPRI, available at: https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/fs_2103_at_2020.pdf. *Stop arming Israel*, Campaign against the arms trade, available at: <https://caat.org.uk/resources/countries/israel/>. *It’s time for Canada to end arms sales to Israel*, Labour against the arms trade, available at: <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/its-time-to-end-canadian-arms-sales-to-israel> .