

# HRC29: Statement on Palestine

29 June 2015

## **Statement and Recommendations by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) on behalf of the Palestinian Women National Coalition of 1325 on the Accountability for Human Rights Violations in Palestine**

*(Names of member organisations at the end of statement)*

Since its creation in 2006, member states of the Human Rights Council (HRC) have passed fifty-seven resolutions condemning human rights violations of Palestinians and requiring immediate and urgent action from the State of Israel. It has also established a number of independent inquiries or fact-finding missions to investigate abuses, including extreme military actions, committed by Israel against the people whose territory it occupies.

Nonetheless, even as the HRC notes and condemns on-going human rights violations and acknowledges the deteriorating situation in the Occupied State of Palestine particularly in besieged Gaza, there has been no corresponding translation into real obligations by member states to ensure that Israel, the occupying power, is held accountable for these violations. As a result, the HRC has done nothing to prevent further abuses and consistently fails to protect the Palestinian people.

The recent [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#) (A/HRC/28/78) released 22 January 2015 offers a strong statement about the effects of Israel's human rights violations on the Palestinian people, making specific mention of the impacts of the 50-day 2014 Israeli wide scale military offensive, "Operation Protective Edge", against besieged Gaza. UN figures indicate that 551 children and 299 women are among those who were killed in this military offensive or, as the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights concludes, 7 in 10, or 76% of victims, were civilians. While these numbers speak volumes about the scale of the devastation and the enormous price paid by civilians, even these numbers cannot do justice to the intensity of human suffering or reveal how the conflict post trauma, will continue to impact on Palestinians, specially women and children, both those living in Gaza and outside the Strip – for months and years to come.

The specifically gendered impacts of the on-going conflict have received little public attention. Palestinian women's organisations remain a lone voice arguing that women's experiences of daily insecurity – whether in their families or in the public sphere – qualify them to bring a different analysis, discourse and set of solutions.

Women's organisations are also among the few who remind the international community that human rights are not selective: they apply to all people at all times regardless of nationality, race, religion or gender and must be applied without

discrimination or prejudice, especially given the extreme vulnerability of a people displaced and controlled through prolonged military occupation. The images that were seen around the world almost a year ago showed the full impacts of the destruction in Gaza on ordinary civilians, particularly on women. Hundreds of thousands around the globe stood in solidarity with Palestinians, demonstrating and calling on their governments to take action to protect the population of Gaza. They expected a full response from the member states gathered here today. Yet their hopes for justice have not been met.

To date it is clear that exigencies of political and economic allegiance have overridden human rights obligations in the HRC some of the positions adopted here seek to justify violence, further to justify or protect the impunity of Israel. Member states are effectively doing nothing – either to prevent the conflict from deepening even further, or to take concrete measures of accountability that will save lives.

While pursuing its policy of denying full and free access to the Commission of Inquiry as to other human rights mandates established by the Council and violating its duty and responsibility as a member state to respect and protect human rights, Israel, in its report [“The 2014 Gaza Conflict: Factual and Legal Aspects”](#), released on Sunday June 14<sup>th</sup>, abrogates its responsibilities as a UN Member State, excusing its military for committing war crimes and defending its continuous violation of international law. The report seeks to maintain Israel’s apparent impunity from prosecution and is intended to pre-empt any independent investigation that would lead to sanctions or any other effective response. Its goal is to discredit and undermine the findings of the Commission of Inquiry report on Gaza even before it is officially released.

### **Obligations to implement WPS agenda**

It is the collective responsibility of the international community to ensure women’s protection and security in accordance with UNSCR 1325, 2122 and CEDAW GR30, to take seriously what women advise and to act on the new ideas and observations they present. Yet nothing has changed on the ground. As Palestinian women have repeatedly observed, this inaction marks yet another set of broken promises and failed assurances. It seems to indicate that this Council is not capable of producing the political will necessary to uphold and protect *universal* human rights without bias.

Intent, once more, on reminding this Council of its obligations, Palestinian women national coalition reiterate the recommendations they made at the 26th session of the Human Rights Council. They remain firm in their position that the mind-set of the member states of this Council must change, and that all the necessary means and available mechanisms to address on-going human rights violations – as a collective responsibility of the States gathered here today – must be brought to put an end to Israel impunity and ensure ways and means to protect civilians.

Member states have the duty to guaranty the fulfilment of Palestinian human rights including their right to freedom and self-determination by bringing an end to the military occupation of Palestine and the unceasing violence with which it is maintained and deepened. Continued failure to act will only increase extremism, violence and insecurity in the occupied State of Palestine, Israel and in neighbouring

countries, including those that have harboured Palestinian refugees for decades and are under increasing strain to maintain their protection of the world's oldest refugee population. This Council has the mandate, and must produce the political will, to act decisively, to end Israeli impunity, to safeguard Palestinians, and to signal to the world that upholding human rights brings hope and human security.

## **Recommendations**

- The only way to achieve sustainable peace and security is for Israel, the occupying Power, to end its prolonged occupation, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. We, the Palestinian women organisations of the National Coalition, urge member states to use all necessary efforts to ensure the ending of the Occupation, including the provision of immediate international protection for all civilian population in the Occupied State of Palestine.
- High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention affirmed in their declaration of 17 December 2014 that “no violation of international humanitarian law by any party to a conflict can relieve the other party from its own obligations under international humanitarian law.” All members of the international community must take immediate action and implement effective punitive measures in order to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law. Legal accountability must be sought including through the International Criminal Court. We urge the Government of Switzerland and contracting parties, to ensure convening a Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention without further delay to take adequate measures to insure Israel's obedience to the Fourth Convention and First Additional Protocol.
- We perceive recommendations of the Independent, International Commission of Inquiry, as an additional step towards accountability of the Israeli violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied State of Palestine. We, the national Palestinian women coalition call on all member states of the Human Rights Council to ensure that the findings of the Commission form a base for developing immediate concrete adequate accountability measures to prevent the recurrence of Israeli crimes and provide justice for Palestinian victims.
- As the situation in Gaza worsens, with fully 70% of the population now entirely dependent on humanitarian aid, we Palestinian women reiterate our concern that the situation will deteriorate further. The international community must sanction Israel for continuing to violate humanitarian law by refusing to lift the ongoing siege on Gaza and for pursuing its policies of demolitions of houses, evictions, expanding settlements and forcible transfer of Palestinian community in West Bank and East Jerusalem and ensure the rights of mobility, free access and movement from and to Occupied Palestinian territory for people and goods.
- We call for accountability for arbitrary detention and the ill treatment of detainees notably children and women.
- We, urgently call on the international community to ensure women's protection and security in accordance with UNSR 1325, 2122 and CEDAW GR30.

- We, call upon the United Nations Member States and the Human Rights Council to ensure immediate action for reconstruction in Gaza, to hold Israel accountable for the destruction and to guarantee the prevention of any further destruction perpetrated by the occupying power. Israel must compensate all those who are affected. In the process of reconstruction, the international community should see to it that Israel would not profit from the reconstruction operation in any way. We also urgently call for the consultation and inclusiveness of women and a holistic gender perspective the reconstruction process.
- We, the Palestinian women organizations, urge the Human Rights Council to support and hold a special session on the human rights situation of Palestinian women both under occupation and in refugee camps

Name of women organisations:

*The General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW). The Women's Affairs technical committee (WATC), Palestinian Working Woman Society for development (PWWSD), The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), Filastinyat, Women Media and development (TAM), Women Studies center, Women's Center for legal aid and counseling (WACLAC) The National, YWCA of-Palestine.*