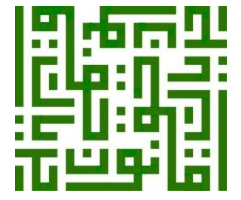


الهيئة المستقلة لحقوق الإنسان
" ديوان المظالم " - فلسطين



The Palestinians Independent Commission for Human Rights

Commissioner

General

*Ahmad Harb

4th August 2014
Ramallah, West Bank
Palestine

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Dear Chairpersons of NHRIs,

The Independent Commission for Human Rights is writing to you today to call on all National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) to take immediate action and intervene with their governments to stop the horrifying Israeli military aggression against Palestinian civilians and their properties in the Gaza Strip, and to bring an end to the seven years of Israeli military blockade on the Gaza Strip.

ICHR is extremely alarmed by the systematic Israeli collective punishments, war crimes and crimes against humanity that are deliberately committed against innocent Palestinian civilians including children, women and the elderly in the Gaza Strip resulting in flagrant violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, particularly the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilians in Times of War and under Occupation.

Dear Chairpersons of NHRIs,

This is the 29th day of the Israeli military operation "Protective Edge" against the Gaza Strip. We are witnessing a catastrophic deterioration of human rights situation in the Gaza Strip with the continuing increase in casualties among civilians. The Gaza Strip is at the edge of a serious humanitarian and environmental crisis with the cut off electricity, water, and the falling of the whole sewage system in the Gaza Strip, thereby increasing the risks of epidemic diseases especially with the inability of the ICRC and

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ICHR has been constituted upon Presidential Decree 59 of 1993 and Article 31 of the Amended Basic Law of 2003.

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the Palestinian Red Crescent from recovering dead bodies trapped under their demolished homes in numerous neighborhoods of the Gaza Strip.

As of yesterday, the 3rd of August, according to ICHR monitoring of daily violations, the toll of casualties increased to almost **1900** deaths and **9500** wounded civilians of whom the majorities are children and women, **10080** demolished homes, **480 thousands** displaced civilians, **24** hospitals partially destroyed, **118** mosques destroyed, **167** educational institutions destroyed and **8** wells were destroyed. In addition the Israeli military forces targeted the main power plants and UNRWA schools, where over 270,000 of the 500,000 Palestinian civilians (25% of the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip), who were forcibly displaced from their homes, have taken refuge in those supposedly “protected” UNRWA schools.

Currently there is no safe place for Palestinian civilians in the whole Gaza Strip especially that the Israeli military forces randomly and disproportionately continue with its severe bombardment from the sea, sky and land on innocent Palestinian civilians resulting in massacres of whole families and high casualties to persons and their properties. This is combined with an already critical human rights and suffocating humanitarian situation resulting from the cruel and strict military blockade (from the land, sea and air) and the restrictions of movement for persons and goods imposed on the Gaza Strip since 2007, making of the Gaza Strip the largest prison on earth. Beside the immediate human and material losses, the Israeli military attacks have dangerous long- term impacts on the Gaza Strip at all levels; humanitarian, environmental, physical and mental health of all especially children, and on the human rights situation as a whole.

Dear Chairpersons of NHRIs,

ICHR urges you as Chairpersons, Commissioners and staff of your respectful NHRIs to adopt a clear principled human rights position against such illegal practices, human rights violations, and grave breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law, by issuing statements condemning the Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip, as well as the collective punishments imposed on Palestinian civilians which tantamount to

war crimes and crimes against humanity. All previous military aggressions on the Gaza Strip in 2008 and 2012 resulted in no measures for accountability against Israeli officials who committed such crimes especially with the culture of impunity still prevailing.

To ensure that this is not repeated, **we call on your respectful NHRIs** to take the necessary actions in order to urge your governments to use their good offices and diplomatic contacts and relations at the international level and the United Nations to:

- Immediately intervene to end the Israeli military aggression and war crimes committed against civilians in the Gaza Strip, end the current military blockade on the Gaza Strip as one of the important steps towards ending one of the longest belligerent occupations in the world.
- Call on your governments to actively engage with all relevant bodies at the regional and international levels, including the UN Security Council to ensure the immediate protection for civilians in the OPT, and to stop the unprecedented deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and all other parts of the OPT.
- Urge the High Contracting Parties of the Four Geneva Conventions to abide with their moral and legal obligations as stipulated in common article (1) of the conventions and force Israel to respect the Convention in the OPT in all circumstances. Also urge your governments to abide with their legal obligations under articles 146, and 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and make those Israeli officials who have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity accountable before your national courts.
- Call on your governments to pressure Israel as an occupying power to immediately lift the military siege on the Gaza Strip and to treat the 1967 OPT as one geographic and political unit by allowing the movement of persons and goods freely within the OPT.
- ICHR also calls on NHRIs to urge their governments to seriously engage with the UN Human Rights Council and the newly established Commission of Inquiry to

investigate Israeli violations of International Human Rights Law and Humanitarian Law committed during this military aggression on the Gaza Strip, and to ensure that your governments' representatives follow up on the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry to guarantee the implementation of those recommendations.

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Ahmad Harb
Commissioner General