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Editorial: The Fourth Geneva Convention must be implemented!

On the 5th of December, 2001, all signatory parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention will hold a conference in Geneva to discuss the possibility of implementing its articles in Palestine. This initiative comes at a time when the Palestinian/Israeli conflict has reached its peak: when innocent Palestinian children, women and men are being brutally killed, tortured and mistreated with no sense of humanity on the part of the Israeli Occupying Forces. However, Israel and the U.S.A, both signatories of the Convention, are refusing to attend the conference. Another conference, for non-governmental organizations, will be taking place just one day earlier, on the 4th of December.

Because the Israeli occupation of Palestine constitutes the gravest infringement upon Palestinian women's human, economic and social rights, this conference is of great importance to us women of Palestine. So we add our voices to those of the non-governmental organizations, demanding that:

1. All signatories take responsibility for fulfilling the Fourth Geneva Convention, according to legal standards stated in the Convention.
2. All signatories compel Israel, the Occupying State, to comply with and implement the Convention.
3. All signatories prosecute Israel for the crimes it has committed against the Palestinian occupied nation and land in violation of the Convention
4. International protection be provided to the Palestinian nation.

We consider the implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention to be the basis for international peace, through which security and safety will prevail and violence will be ended.

Women service workers can barely afford transportation to work

Amin Abu-Wardeh, Nablus

Palestinian women service workers in the West Bank are suffering extreme violations of their rights as workers, varying from one area to the other depending on the living standards. These are women working in service agencies, legal or engineering firms, hospitals, clinics and sewing companies.

Faten, a young woman working at legal firm in Nablus, earns only 350 NIS per month, out of which 75 NIS are spent on transportation to and from work. How will she be able to support her family and herself with such a low wage? There are many other women whose cases are similar to Faten's case. Despite having to pass many Israeli blockades, walk long distances through the mountains under constant threat of Israeli gunfire and potential death, these women still insist on pursuing their work, regardless of their low and discriminatory wages. Due to the political and economic situation currently in Palestine, some employers find the opportunity to abuse workers, especially women, knowing they have no other option than to accept their low wages or be fired. Due to their desperate financial needs, such women are likely to accept these violations of their rights.

Even under normal circumstances, when the economic and political situation was relatively stable, discrimination in the labor market on the basis of sex existed. Men's wages in a specific work field tend to be higher than those of their women counterparts. If in normal times discrimination existed, in war situations everything becomes possible, and women workers become the victims. This is a great violation of Palestinian women service workers' rights.

Disabled Palestinians on International Day: Putting our commitment to the test Ahmad Saleem, Ramallah

Jameeleh, Husam, Ra'fat and Ibtisam, all young Palestinian children, sit silently with shy smiles on their faces in a room at the office of the Local Committee for the Rehabilitation of Disabled in Al-Am'ary Refugee Camp.

The Human Development Report 1995-1996 shows that the percentage of disabilities in Palestine is considered to be one of the highest percentages in the Middle East, representing 3% of the population. A medical survey conducted in 1997 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip released the following figures, according to the type of disability:

- Mental disability: 19,8%
- Hearing disabilities: 11%
- Speech disorders: 9%

This is a serious issue in Palestine, however it has not been given the priority it deserves considering how many people in our society are affected. For example, there are a large number of centers for individuals with mobility disorders, since this disability comprises 30% of total disabilities. But centers for mental disabilities are rare, although there are around 15,000 Palestinians who are mentally disabled. The political situation over the past thirty years, the

ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, has resulted in increasingly numbers of disabilities due to injuries inflicted by Israeli soldiers.

One of the local institutions providing assistance to the disabled is the Local Committee for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled, located in Al-Am'ary and Qalandia Refugee Camps. Despite financial limitations and a lack of sufficient machines and tools, including a physiotherapy room, the Committee continues to providing services for the disabled. Following is a brief list of their activities:

- Care taking, education and awareness-building programs
- Remodeling the homes of seventeen disabled persons in Al-Am'ary Refugee Camp to accommodate the needs of his/her disability.
- The Beauty Room Program for Disabled Girls: disabled girls are trained as beauticians and eventually pass on their skills to other girls. This program is an income-generating program, providing financial support for both the disabled girls and the Committee
- Educational programs and seminars conducted for the relatives and parents of the disabled, to raise their awareness of ways to cope with the disabled
- A daily hot meal is served to the disabled
- Home visits to train family members on how to treat, train and take care of the disabled person in the house

The Committee is in great need of support in order to be able to continue its work, and proposes the creation of special schools dedicated for disabled children. These schools would serve as the base through which disabled persons can be integrated back in society. For a long time, many have promised to work to improve the condition of disabled Palestinian through job training and placement, but these promises haven't been put into action. Society still tends to view disabled people as weak and pathetic, but this issue is of great importance and must be addressed at once.

Conference in Geneva to discuss Israeli violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention Lubna Al-Ashqar, Palestinian Women Journalists Office, Nablus

The Fourth Geneva Convention, signed on 12/8/1949, states that civilian and military people who are the victims of armed conflict must be protected. Israel is one of the signatories of the Convention, having signed it in 1967 when it occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but has never abided by it but rather has issued numerous military regulations and orders in violation of the Convention.

Riyad Abul-Hassan, attorney for the International Solidarity Organization, commented that Israel has committed many crimes against innocent Palestinian civilians and their property over the long years of occupation. He added that, "Israel demolished homes, confiscated land and built settlements. It imposed collective punishment on the Palestinian nation. Israel doesn't consider itself a temporary occupying power, but regards itself as a permanent ruler over the land. The way Israel has been treating Palestinian prisoners violates basic human rights. Many prisoners have been killed in cold blood, left to bleed to death from injuries, denied medical treatment and brutally tortured. These are all war crimes equivalent to those committed by the Serbs in Bosnia

and Herzegovina. We hope that serious measures are taken at the 5th of December 2001 conference in Geneva to hold Israel responsible for all its war crimes and for the atrocities and massacres it has committed. All Israeli war criminals must be tried as war criminals to bring an end to their inhumane treatment of Palestinians."

**Victim of a violent husband: "M" provides for her three daughters
Maisa' Abu-Dawwas, Palestinian Women Journalists Office, Nablus**

"M" is a 28-year-old woman and the mother of three young daughters. She married a man five years younger than she, who had been married previously to another woman. At first she refused his proposals of marriage, not wanting to contribute to another woman's suffering. However, he eventually presented her with divorce papers from his first wife, telling her the divorce was a result of irresolvable problems between them. "M" agreed to the marriage. However, from the beginning her husband never showed any love or respect to her. From the start of their life together he began beating her, swearing at her and humiliating her, a situation that continued for years. After one year of marriage he suddenly returned his first wife, and the problems grew even worse between "M" and her husband. The husband was a father of four sons from his first wife, and three daughters from "M", but he behaved as though his sons were everything to him, as his heirs and carriers of his name.

One day, while "M" was in the kitchen, she heard her youngest daughter, who was three years old, crying and screaming. She immediately realized that her husband was brutally beating his own daughter. She was unable to intervene, and stood on the other side of the door weeping. She knew that her interference would only increase his rage and violence. However, after this she finally left her husband and went back to her parent's home. She has now been divorced for a year and a half and live in two small rooms near her parents' home. She works as a janitor at a children's nursery and earns very little, but is content to having her three daughters at her side, under her custody.

**A martyr every two hours: what kind of peace does Israel have in mind?
Widad Al-Barghuthi**

The Israeli Arabic radio channel usually broadcast a song about peace every morning after its six-thirty news broadcast. One morning it played this song just after announcing the number of Palestinians children killed by a mine planted near their school. With the listener's minds filled with images of blood and torn pieces of flesh, the radio station broadcasts a song about peace for them to hear!

The Israeli Russian newspaper *Festy* published in its weekly supplement in the Jerusalem News newspaper an interview with four Israeli youth from Jerusalem, living in Beit Hakerem which was built on the Palestinian village of 'Ein Karem, near the destroyed village of Deir Yassin. They were asked their opinions regarding the declaration of a Palestinian state. Kostia, a Russian immigrant, said: "I have been in Israel for only two months, but I truly feel that the establishment

of a Palestinian state will not enhance the situation, therefore Israel must remain in the Palestinian areas." Elia stated similarly, "The Palestinians haven't calmed down yet, therefore Israel must continue its occupation." Sveeta commented, "Israel must continue its control over the Palestinian Autonomous areas for another 100 years. If by then the Palestinians are ready for peace, we can think about it." Raslan rejected the whole idea: "Israel isn't in need of an independent body next to it." These four youth, men and women in the early twenties, are similar in age to the Israeli soldiers occupying the Palestinian land, destroying fields and homes and killing innocent civilians and children. What kind of peace does Israel envision?

An Israeli journalist, Ya'il Baz, wrote an article in Ma'arev newspaper describing the behavior of a group of Israeli youth at Super Land. When they got scared during the "Horror Game," they started to shout "Death to Arabs! Death to Arabs!" in front of relatives and bystanders. Is this Israeli young generation ready for peace? Will it ever be ready to acknowledge the other as human beings?

Daily, Palestinians are killed, many of whom are children. Since the outbreak of the Intifada, 320 Palestinian children have been killed by Israeli bullets and shells shot by soldiers of the same age as those shouting "Death to Arabs!" at Super Land. The most recent crime committed was the killing of five school children, all from the same extended family, by an Israeli landmine. They were torn to pieces, their heads blown off their bodies. Is an apology enough? Tomorrow new atrocities will be committed, other children killed, while the whole world watches and the U.S.A. gives its blessing and assistance to Israel's acts of terror.

Israel launches an Arabic satellite channel Ahlam Hammad, Gaza

Originally approved in 1993, Israel is planning to launch an Arabic language satellite channel by the end of 2001, in the midst of the Intifada and all that it implies. Israel plans to use this channel to warp the image of the Palestinian struggle, influencing Arab consciousness and sowing distrust among the Arab peoples and their governments.

Dr. 'Azmi Bshara, an Arab member of the Israeli Knesset, stated that the Israeli media is highly focused on the goal of enhancing Israel's image and warping the Palestinian image. He added, "The satellite channel intends to address Palestinians living in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as in Israel proper. It will also target the entire Arab world." The only way to counter such an effort is to improve the Arab media, to attract the Arab listener and educate him/her as to the actual facts.

This Arabic satellite channel will present political, educational, cultural, entertainment and sports programs, which might appear to be harmless at first glance but will ultimately be used to wage a psychological war against the Arab nation once a large number of people have been attracted to it.

Many Palestinian officials have stressed the importance of boycotting the channel and the need to initiate a Hebrew language satellite channel in response, to show the Palestinian and Arab perspective.

Abu-'Aweid Farm in Gaza: Pregnant women escape from death Bisan Lis-Sahafeh, Gaza

Abu-'Aweid's farm lies northwest of Al-Mighraqa village, to the south of Gaza City, about 600 meters from the Israeli settlement, Netzarim. It has a population of 288 Palestinians, of which 66% are women and children. The area where this farm is located has been referred to as the execution area, and the road to it is known as the bridge of death.

The farm is completely surrounded by Israeli tanks and soldiers. Israeli helicopters pass constantly overhead. Shooting continues day and night, making the lives of Palestinians living on the farm unbearable. Fear overshadows their lives. Their children have forgotten what it means to feel safe and secure. They have started making toys for themselves that represent occupier and occupied, attacker and victim, making military helicopters or tanks out of cardboard. Their psychological health has deteriorated, they cry constantly, because as long shots are heard outside they do not feel safe. How could they, when their homes are riddled with bullet holes, when their beds and mattresses ripped by shells, and the road to school has become a bridge of death where they risk injury and death?

Women are the most severely affected in the area. Parents keep their daughters from attending school, fearing for their safety on the road and thus depriving them of education. Women's income sources -- their sheep stocks, poultry, and their grape fields have slaughtered or destroyed by Israeli bulldozers, tanks and shells. Pregnant women fear the nights, when it is impossible to reach the hospital. No cars are allowed near the farm at night. Many have had miscarriages resulting simply from fear. How can these people continue to live day and night under continuous gunfire, imagining their children dying a thousand times everyday as a result of Israeli terror, fear and bullets, but helpless to do anything and with no way to face this great power that is destroying them?