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**Editorial: No to Israeli aggression in the name of security**

On the anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights, 10/12/2001, women of Palestine demand their right to a life with dignity as enshrined in international declarations, agreements and statements. The special day comes in the midst of ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian nation and land, with one massacre after the other taking place while the under the eyes of the international community and justification by the U.S.

We, the women of Palestine, stress the need to join together to respond to these in a strategy way so as to influence international public opinion. We also believe that civilians must be excluded from acts of violence and Israeli civilians should not be targeted in response to the Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians and land. Targeting Israeli civilians will isolate us and decrease international sympathy to our cause.

We women of Palestine agree upon:

1. Our right to resist the Israeli occupation and bring it to an end
2. The need for compliance with international law, declarations and agreements
3. The need for international protection for the Palestinian nation

We however reject Israel's portrayal of our legitimate struggle against occupation as terror, and self-defense as violence. We refuse Israel's attempts to justify all its acts of terror on the pretext of maintaining Israel's security. We, Palestinians, must unite and determine together the best means by which to continue our struggle. In commemoration of the International Declaration of Human Rights Day we affirm our right to expression and to participation in shaping our future and fighting the Israeli occupation.

**Bitter memories of the deaths of dismembered children**  
**Hidaya Shim'on, Gaza**

Last November, five school children between the ages of 6 and 12 were brutally killed by an Israeli landmine near their school in Khan Younis. They were all related to each other. Five innocent children were killed in an instant, torn into unidentifiable pieces scattered across the area. Their dismembered limbs could be found in fields 150 meters away from the scene of the explosion. Here are the words of some of their relatives:

Zeinab Al-Astal, 35 years old, mother of two of the children killed, Akram and Muhammad: "I woke up to find myself lying in a hospital. At that time I only knew that Muhammad had been killed, and my shock was doubled when they told me that my young son Akram had also been killed. I cannot imagine their flesh and blood was scattered all around, in such a horrifying image. There is nothing left of them, nothing."

Ibrahim Al-Astal, 32 years old, relative of the dead children: "I carried Muhammad. His face was torn, his intestines hung out of his belly, his leg had been completely severed from his body. I picked up his kidney from the ground. I couldn't tell who the other martyr was. He had no arms, no legs, and no head. His striped shirt seemed similar to my son's shirt, which made me think it was my son. I started gathering his remains from all around. Later, I realized it wasn't my son, because I saw him in front of me. I grabbed him in my arms; I couldn't believe he was alive. It took us four hours to pick up all the remaining body parts and try to identify the children killed. They were all my nephews. People continued gathering their remnants from the nearby potato and pepper fields. We couldn't comprehend the enormity of the situation. Which body part was whose? How should we bury them, in five different graves, or in one? Those were horrible moments and decisions to be made."

Muhammad, 12 years old, a student from the same school as the dead children: "I saw Muhammad's body torn in two halves. I saw him at his last moments. He opened his mouth, coughed and died. I didn't know whose flesh was flying all around me. I started screaming hysterically and shivering in an uncontrollable way. People carried me away from the scene. I sleep well now, I don't feel afraid, but I still haven't been able to really comprehend. I don't want to understand what has happened."

**Wafa' planted a flower before her death**  
**Laila Al-Hamshari, Tulkarem**

Wafa' Naseef, 34, lived with her husband, 'Azzam, two daughters, Shareefah and Ala', and two sons, Lu'ai and Muhammad, in Artah Neighborhood to the south of Tulkarem. A few days before the beginning of the Holy Month of Ramadan, Wafa' was killed by an Israeli, by a bullet to the chest.

She had been hiding with her family in the living room. The sounds of shots and tanks filled the neighborhood. It seemed like a never ending battle and they were caught in the middle. After a while, however, the shooting stopped. It was silent outside, which encouraged Wafa' to go to the balcony to see what had taken place. She asked her children to stay where they were, afraid for their lives. But while she stood on the balcony, the shooting started again. She tried to go back into house as quick as she could, but the bullet was quicker. She was shot in the chest, leaving her dead immediately, in front of her children and husband.

Her children are suffering severely. They are in shock and are unable to recover from their loss. When they returned home from their grandparents' house two weeks after their mother's death, they were overwhelmed by the sense of emptiness and agony from her absence. Her six-year-old daughter, Ala', constantly calls, "Mother...mother...why have you gone and left me alone? I am still young. Did the Israelis take you away from us?" 'Azzam, Wafa's husband, describes how "tender-hearted and sweet Wafa' was, how loving and caring. She loved life. She asked our son, Lu'ai, to replant some of the flowers in the house so they could thrive better. She planted life in our home, but she didn't live long enough for us to enjoy it."

She has left her family forever; and at a time when spirituality gathers Muslim families together, they miss her terribly, their tears flowing down their cheeks, day and night.

### **Double standards: They spoil their dogs and kill our children Widad Al-Barghuthi**

In some countries, people are extremely fond of animals, to the extent of naming them, feeding them and treating them like members of the family. There are many animal organizations and clubs, such as the Dog Owners' Club in Tel Aviv, which holds competitions and special exhibitions for dogs.

For us Palestinians, it is very difficult to adopt the same tenderness towards animals as we see in many western societies and in Israel, because every day we are in contact with Palestinian families who barely have enough food to stay alive. I would like to point out Israel's double standard that is highlighted by this issue. On the one hand, it hosts animal-friendly clubs, and on the other it targets, kills, imprisons, humiliates and dehumanizes Palestinians in every possible way. The same state that humanizes animals, dehumanizes humans. Many Palestinian children and elderly people are prevented from getting to hospitals for treatment the Israeli closure around Palestinian cities and towns, but at the same time dog clubs within Israel flourish. How is it possible for such a contradiction to exist? Israel has lost its humanity for humans, and substitutes it with granting humanity to dogs and cats.

### **33,297 Palestinian children have become workers Mirvat Al-Shafi'y**

Since the outbreak of the current Palestinian Intifada, and due to the deteriorating economic and political circumstances, hundreds of Palestinian children have been forced to work in order to provide for their families and siblings. Wherever you walk in the streets, you can hear the voices of young children calling out the prices of their merchandise as they carry them from place to place trying to make a living.

These children, who range from 6 to 17 in age, have been forced to become workers as a result of their father's death, unemployment or abandonment. These children are expected to protect their families; they have become tough, strong men at the age of nine. During Ramadan they sell lemon and dates, at other times, vegetables. Some work as car mechanics, or at men's cafés, or they work alongside their fathers, if they are still around and capable. Ahmad (12), 'Adnan (6) and 'Umar (9), Mahmoud (17) are four out of hundreds of children forced to work to earn their living. They often end up dropping out of school to concentrate on their work, sacrificing their innocence and childhood forever.

A report published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2001: Children of Palestine - Statistics and Issues (the Reality of Employing Children between 10-17 Years Old) indicates that:

1. Economic hardship is the primary factor driving children to work.
2. The type of work done by children is usually similar to that done by their fathers – namely, low-paid labour
3. The percentage of young women unpaid workers within their families has risen from 68.8% in 1999 to 74.4% in 2000.
4. 64.2% of Palestinian families fall beneath the poverty lines: 55.7% in the West Bank and 81.4% in the Gaza Strip. (The poverty line is currently determined to be 1622 NIS per month for a family consisting of two adults and four children.)

### **Racist discrimination against Arabs in Israeli schools**

A report published by Human Rights Monitor entitled "Second Class Citizens: Discrimination Against Palestinian Arab Children in Israeli Schools," shows that Israel practices systematic discrimination against Palestinian Arabs in its public schools. Out of the 1.6 million schoolchildren in Israel, one quarter are Palestinian Arab children, and the rest Israeli Jews. Palestinian Arab children go to schools which are run by Israel but differ from the schools attended by Israeli Jews. Following are some facts illustrating the discrimination between the two communities in Israel:

1. The level of education provided for Palestinian Arabs is much lower than that offered to Israeli Jews.
2. The number of school dropouts among Palestinian Arab children is three times more than that among Israeli Jewish children.
3. The percentage of Palestinian Arab children succeeding in university entrance exams is much lower than the percentage of Israeli Jews. Only a small number of Palestinian Arabs enter universities as a result. Palestinian Arabs living in Al-Negev Desert suffer most.
4. The Israeli Ministry of Education doesn't spend as much on an Israeli Arab child as it does on an Israeli Jewish child.

5. Palestinian Arab classes are on average 20% larger in terms of number of students than their Israeli Jew counterparts.
6. Medical treatment, counseling and vocational training programs are less in Palestinian Arab schools than in Israeli Jewish schools.
7. School facilities for Palestinian Arabs are inadequate compared to those for Israeli Jews.
8. Disabled Palestinian Arab children are not offered the services and financial assistance available to disabled Israeli Jewish children. They are not eligible to be enrolled in private schools and lack appropriate academic curricula.
9. The Israeli government doesn't dedicate adequate resources to develop the Arabic school curriculum, despite the fact that the official language in Arab schools is Arabic.

Human Rights Monitor urges the Ministry of Education to take serious measures to adopt a written policy that will ensure equality and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, ethnicity or gender. It also stresses the importance of providing all schools equally with financial resources and services, regardless of their religion or ethnicity. It urges the Knesset to pass a law prohibiting discrimination and encouraging Arabs to participate in high-ranking decision-making positions.

### **Arab women at Hebrew University harassed by extremist Jews Amin Abu Wardeh, Nablus**

In the midst of the Palestinian Intifada that started 15 months ago, Palestinian Arab students, both women and men, who study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem are suffering frequent attacks, harassment and discrimination both on campus and off university grounds.

At the end of November 2001, three young Israeli men attacked five Palestinian Arab women students. They were beaten, the headscarves were torn off, and one was almost choked to death, on their way back to their dorm in a Jewish neighborhood. Two years ago, the apartment of Palestinian Arab girls was set on fire, endangering their lives.

Palestinian Arab women students express that such attacks are not isolated incidents but occur frequently. Israelis often make threatening and degrading comments to them, using slurs like, "Death to Arabs." Arab women are subjected to continuous humiliation and profanity, sometimes having garbage thrown at them. Racist graffiti can also be found written on the walls of Arab homes or near dorms.

Discrimination between Palestinian and Israeli students is clearly witnessed within the confines of university life -- in the classrooms, cafeterias, the behavior of lecturers in their treatment and evaluation of students, and in the services and advantages provided to them.

Dr. 'Azmi Bshara and Mr. Abdulmalek Dahamsheh, members of the Knesset, consider such anti-Arab attitudes and discrimination to be the result of Israel's systemic policy of racism and incitement. They stress the importance of prosecuting perpetrators of such acts, and have approached Hebrew University for support in this regard, but found the university unresponsive.

Such attacks are usually overlooked on the pretext of insufficient evidence. Perpetrators face no consequences, encouraging them to continue their racist and inhumane attacks with impunity.

**Faraj dies at a checkpoint two hours after being born**  
**Shahnaz Abdul-Razzaq, Nablus**

"S", a Palestinian woman from the village of Al-Maleh in the northern Jordan Valley, was forced to give birth to her son, Faraj, at an Israeli blockade erected on the main road between Tubas and the northern Jordan Valley, near the village of Tayaseer. After managing to pass several Israeli barriers, "S" was not allowed through the final blockade to reach the hospital. Her cries of pain meant nothing to the Israeli soldiers watching her suffer. Her husband and mother-in-law had accompanied her in the car but could do little to help. Her mother-in-law assisted her as much as she could with her basic skills, but these were inadequate for delivering a child. They were held at the blockade for three hours. Finally the child was born, bringing happiness to his parents and grandmother. However, birth complications led to his death within minutes, leaving his family in sorrow, pain and grief. Medical sources have announced that the long hours of waiting at the Israeli blockade, preventing "S" from reaching the hospital, is the primary cause for the child's death.