



Joint Statement on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

29/11/2021



On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which calls for the partition of Palestine into two states: One for the Jewish people and another for the Arab Palestinians. The resolution demands that Palestinians have the right to national independence and a sovereign state, yet 74 years later, they remain under military occupation. They continue to be forcibly displaced from their homes and lands and robbed of their right to self-determination.

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA) and its member association, the YWCA of Palestine reminds the Member States of the United Nations that they have a moral and legal obligation to implement the recognition of Palestine as an independent state and end the occupation. We call on civil society organizations and individuals globally to break the silence about the ongoing suffering and oppression of Palestinians.

Living under military occupation has made life unbearable for Palestinians. Israel continues its arbitrary policies of home demolitions, systematic forced displacement, movement restriction and land appropriation. Although illegal under international law, Israel is putting endless efforts towards illegal settlement expansion over Palestinian land within the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Palestinian neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem suffer the consequences of these policies. In May 2021, 28 families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood were at imminent risk of eviction from their homes, in which they have lived for generations, to only be replaced by Israeli settlers. These families have fought for years in Israeli courts to prove they are the rightful owners of their homes. Their battle is far from over!

The economy of Palestine continues to suffer due to the occupation, which has resulted in the scarcity of job opportunities for Palestinians, especially young people. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the youth unemployment rate in 2020 reached 64% among females and 33% among males, and "were the highest in Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank (67% and 24% respectively)".^[1] The occupation exacerbates violence against women, as three women were killed by Israeli forces in 2020, while 128 were arrested in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza.^[2] There are currently 34 Palestinian women in Israeli prisons.^[3]

The 14-year-old siege on Gaza takes its toll on the lives of 2.1 million Palestinians who literally live in an open-air prison. The blockade has devastated Gaza's economy leaving Gazans stranded in poverty. It restricts their movement, obstructs the import of goods, especially medical supplies, and limits the provision of electricity, affecting medical

services and hospital operations severely. Gaza witnessed four wars, the most recent one back in May 2021, which resulted in 256 casualties, including 66 children, and 40 women. Almost 2000 people were injured.^[4] The constant state of violence and isolation, and deteriorating conditions have immensely affected the mental health of Gazans, especially children and youth.

Israel strives to undermine Palestinian NGOs who carry the weight of sustainable development with the absence of a fully functioning authority in Palestine. Its recent move at this has been designating six well-respected and long-serving human rights defenders as “terrorist organizations” under Israel’s Anti-Terrorism Law 2016. These organizations included Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (Addameer); Al-Haq; Defense for Children – Palestine; the Union of Agricultural Work Committees; Bisan Center for Research and Development; and the Union of Palestinian Women Committees. This move criminalizes these organizations, and cuts off funding and support they receive, thus weaken the international solidarity with Palestine.

We, the World YWCA and the YWCA of Palestine demand that human rights and international law be respected, affirmed and protected for all. We support Palestine’s right to self-determination as guaranteed in UN Security Council Resolution 242 and as affirmed in Resolution 338. Peace with justice has been a constant vision and goal throughout the more than 160 years of the global YWCA movement. As one of the largest women’s movements in the world, we assert the role of women and young women in peace building and conflict resolution at all levels as detailed in UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

We know women and young women leadership is essential to promoting non-violence and achieving lasting peace and justice.

We call upon the international community and policy makers to

- Support the rights of the Palestinians as articulated in the UN resolutions, especially the right to self-determination, freedom, independence and return and to recognize the Palestinian State on the borders of 1967;
- Hold accountable Israel for the continued violations of human rights in accordance with international law and the relevant international conventions;
- Take concrete and proactive measures to end the occupation and colonization of Palestine, including imposing sanctions and banning trade with Israel.

Today we stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers from Palestine and we reconfirm that there can be no justice and peace and no potential for sustainable development under occupation.

Sources:

[1] The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “On The Eve Of The International Youth Day, the Palestinian Central Bureau Of Statistics (PCBS) Issues A Press Release Demonstrating The Situation Of

The Youth In The Palestinian Society” (12 August 2021):
<https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4046>

[2] The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “H.E. Dr. Awad, Highlights the Situation of the Palestinian Women on the Eve of the International Women's Day, 08/03/2021” (7 March 2021);
https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_7-3-2021-WD-en.pdf

[3] Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (ADDAMEER), “Statistics” (7 November 2021):
<https://www.addameer.org/statistics>

[4] OCHA, “Protection of Civilians Report” (04 June 2021): <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/24-31-may-2021>