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A statement issued by

Human Rights and Democracy Media Center "SHAMS"

On the occasion of the Eighth of March, International Women's Day

Israel and the excessive power of their extremists are the enemies of women

"SHAMS" center **condemns** the atrocities and violations perpetrated by the Israeli occupation against Palestinian women. For 51 days during the summer of 2014, women were one of the main victims of the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, where 489 women, representing about 22 percent of the total of victims, were martyred. Of this figure, 195 were under the age of 18, 251 between the ages of 18 and 59, and 43 were women over 60 years of age. Moreover, 3,532 Palestinian women were injured, constituting 31 percent of the total number of injured in Israel's aggression. Hundreds of children were also made orphans because of the near two-month long assault, about 51 percent of who are females: 37 percent lost their mothers while 13 percent lost both parents.

The State of Israel regularly breaches International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, particularly the Geneva Convention of 1949 and its annexed protocol of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and its annexed protocol of 1967, the CEDAW Convention of 1977 and its optional protocol of 1999, and Decision No. 1325 issued by the UN Security Council. Israel also continues to arrest Palestinian women in great numbers. During 2014, Israeli forces arrested 112 female Palestinians, a 70 percent increase from 2013.



"SHAMS" Center **reminds** the international community that the 8th of March represents an important opportunity to measure the success of efforts led by women to emphasize their legitimate rights and to continue their struggle to cease all forms of harm and injustice inflicted upon them around the world. International Women's Day gives women a voice, unifies their efforts and highlights the opportunities and challenges they face in obtaining their political, economic, social, and human rights. In light of the negative atmosphere that women often live in with regard to violence, rape, and both physical and psychological assault, the situation for women in countless communities around the world has become an international disgrace. Violence conducted against women is typically due to the fact that laws and official state policies discriminate against women in political, social, and economic dimensions, thereby creating conditions that facilitate oppression and a culture of impunity.

"SHAMS" Center **calls** upon the Palestinian National Authority to enact new legislation that protects women and preserves their dignity and rights in line with international treaties and conventions, particularly the International Bill of Human Rights and the CEDAW Convention. Despite the fact that Palestine signed the CEDAW convention at the beginning of April 2014, the political will to implement its provisions has been lacking and the rights of Palestinian women are consistently violated and they are thus routinely subjected to different forms of oppression. The state of Palestine should, however, be an exemplary model in the field of respecting women's rights. Ratifying, enacting, and implementing substantive legal reforms through the promulgation of a Palestinian Penal Code, including a Personal Status Law, to address issues such as sexual assault and other crimes against women is a necessary step in this regard.

"SHAMS" center carefully **observes** "fatwas" issued by religious figures, many of which have fostered the spread of ideas and radical beliefs antithetical to welfare and dignity of women. Notwithstanding the confusion and differences of opinions that stem from different religious rulings, at the beginning of the third millennium, it is no longer acceptable to rely on an outdated discourse and legal frame of reference that negates the right and ability of women to engage in political work or to remain skeptical as to whether women are capable of managing public affairs. Unfortunately, while women in countless countries have and continue to occupy high-ranking positions in the public and governmental spheres, we are still discussing the permissibility of allowing women to drive, travel alone, work at



women's clothing stores, and whether obtaining her general socioeconomic and political rights is lawful or an imposed western ideal.

The question that arises, then, is primarily why politicians have failed at solving national issues yet males are still the only decision-makers concerning such important political issues.

"THE END"