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Statement for immediate release issued by

The Center for Human Rights and Democracy Media "SHAMS"

On the occasion of the 8th of March, International Women's Day and the Year of Freedom for Arab Women.

The "**SHAMS**" Center applauds the struggle of the Arab woman especially in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and all over the Arab world, and her rightful defense of the causes and concerns of her people, therefore, on the occasion of the International Women's Day of each year we stand to recall what has been already achieved and what still needed to be achieved to enable women to attain their rights in all fields such as education, health, economy, politics and in public life. We seize this opportunity to reaffirm the importance of women's role and effort in achieving peace and sustainable development. Departing from this fact, "**SHAMS**" Center invites all Palestinian and Arab civic institutes and Women's organizations at the frontlines to consider the year of 2011 the year of freedom for Arab women.

The "**SHAMS**" Center calls upon the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Palestinian National Authority headed by H.E President Mr. Mahmud Abbas, and the Prime Minister Dr. Salaam Fayyad to nominate female Palestinian candidates to the Secretary General of the United Nations to be assigned as representatives and envoys to pursue good will on his behalf, and the necessity to approve the agreements, protocols and supplements issued by the UN or any of its commissions to the extent possible (as Palestine is a state with incomplete sovereignty), and lift the limitations in the Palestinian legislation that preclude women role, in addition to harmonizing the local laws with the international agreements in order to support the women cause and in accordance with the international agreements, protocols, and conventions and spreading them on the national level, and reviewing "discriminatory" laws to correspond with international agreements, including gender equality.

The "**SHAMS**" Center Calls upon the UN Commission, the Council of Human Rights as well as international and regional human rights organizations to stand to its responsibilities in order to pressure the occupation to release all Palestinian women in Israeli prisons and put an end to the arbitrary arrests of female activists, and The Center also stresses the necessity to compel the occupying state to comply with the application of the provisions of international humanitarian law and the law of human rights, and to activate the mechanisms to protect women in situations of wars and armed conflicts, as the Arab women are the most affected by the consequences of occupations, wars, and armed conflicts.



The “SHAMS” Center strongly condemns the inhumane practices that the Palestinian and Arab woman are suffering under Israeli and American occupation which breaches all international agreements, including human rights agreements in general, and women’s rights specially, the Geneva convention of 1949 and its additional protocols of the year 1977, and the refugee convention in the year 1951 and its protocols in the year of 1967, and the agreement to end all forms of discrimination against women the year of 1977, and its optional protocol of 1999 , and to put into consideration the provisions of the Rome protocol of the international criminal court.

The “SHAMS” Center recalls that there are still many challenges that limit the participation of women in the process of development, and the most importantly the weakness of her representation in the political and economic life, where the level of this representation is still low compared to the levels reached by other regions in the world. This requires consolidating all efforts in support of women cause, and the importance of working with various social sectors to change prevailing concepts. This calls to unify efforts by local organizations and mechanisms meant for women support in order to reinforce and protect the rights of women, and build her capacities to be closer to the required level of effective participation, so that her participation has a perceptive effect on the reality of every day life.

Based on what mentioned above, it is possible to participate in rebuilding the cause and freedom of women, on the principle of personal freedom, citizenship and human rights, and to emphasize that women freedom is the most important manifestation of humanity and its core concepts, acknowledging that women freedom is an essential demand , in addition to acknowledging her character as an independent individual, equal to man in human dignity, in all rights, and treating her on that foundation are the first steps to free society towards progress, and the liberating women is a needed condition to liberate man.

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