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Immediate press release

Issued by Human Rights and Democracy Center "SHAMS" On the occasion of the International Day for Volunteerism

"SHAMS" center reminds that youth make up more than half of the Palestinian community in numerical terms, but yet they still considered a minority in the political sense. Therefore enabling young people to assume responsibility in the official political bodies is no longer considered one of the basic demands of any democratic political system, but goes beyond that as their political participation is an expression of their concerns and interests. Participation is considered a public concern where individuals can't create change or be an effective unless their role is recognized in public life affairs, and their rights to exercise this role without restrictions of discrimination is acknowledged. This requires first of all substantive changes to be made on the overall legislation and laws that limit the development of youth participation.

The **Center** calls to promote the role of youth in decision-making within youth institutions at all levels, which depends on the existence of a real democratic environment in these institutions, and level of freedom given to youth in terms of freedom of opinion and expression, including ensuring equal opportunities for all young people to participate in building civil democratic society based on equality and justice.

"**SHAMS**" center Appreciates the high outstanding efforts of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the achievement of the youth cross-sectoral national strategic plan, which lays the foundations for a new phase of youth work in Palestine, based on professional and competency according to real needs and priorities of youth sector, and there for, we call upon all Palestinian institutions working with youth to consider this plan as the strategic reference for their work and ensure that their activities and programs are compatible with principles and objectives of this plan in order to promote the principle of optimal investment of human and material resources, hoping that the Youth ministry will soon develop the first action plan stemming from the cross-strategy plan, in order to translate the strategy into reality for the youth and their institutions, in consultation with official institutions and CSOs to identify priorities and development projects related to the strategy .

In the same context, "**SHAMS**" center is greatly concerned about the Gaza dismissed government's decision in closing Sharek Youth Forum, in conjunction with the ongoing celebrations of the Volunteers World Day. SHAMS center recalled that the Sharek Forum is one of the most reputable leading youth institutions in Palestine, which is characterized by professionalism and impartiality. Hence, "SHAMS" Centre commends the initiative of colleagues in Sharek forum to hold a national festival to honor the Palestinian volunteers "Ounah 2010 under the title "to celebrate Palestine ".