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**A statement for immediate release issued by
Human Rights and Democracy Media center "SHAMS"**

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day

"SHAMS" Center **bows** before the spirits of the truth martyrs the journalist Ahmad Mohammed Abu Hussein the correspondent of Sawt Alsha'b radio, and the journalist Yaser Murtaja, photographer of Eye Media, who were martyred and shot by Israeli forces while trying to tell the whole truth. Also, we bow before all the Palestinian martyrs who were killed while defending their homeland, people, identity and history. The center wishes urgent recovery for the journalists who were injured while delivering the truth of excesses committed by the Israeli soldiers targeting children, youth, men & women and using live exploding bullets as well as poisonous gases to disperse protestors in returning marches to break the siege of Gaza Strip which has been blocked for 11 years.

"SHAMS" Center **calls upon** the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection to freedom of opinion and expression, the International Federation of Journalists, and international & regional foundations to take immediate action. In order put an end to the Israeli violations against journalists being considered as civilians. So, the occupying state should protect them and prevent breaches to them based on International Humanitarian Law, and the Geneva Fourth Convention of 1949. It is worth noting that Israeli forces have been infringing upon the journalists in terms of killing, physical torments, injuries, arrests, preventing others from travelling or moving, confiscation or damaging tools, using journalists as human shields, closure of media institutions, disturbance and piracy. Such breaches upon the Palestinian journalists are considered the most dangerous and have negative impact on media outlets and journalists and their capacities to keep performing their duties. It reveals the Israeli intentions to keep journalists and mass media away from covering its crimes.

"SHAMS" Center **reminds** that the president Mahmoud Abbas, in different occasions has assured that freedom of opinion, press and expression have no limits in Palestine however, the status quo indicates that freedom challenge impediments, and is deteriorated. Palestinian press conditions are in trouble, while violations to the Palestinian journalists have never stopped, in terms of detention, threat, terrifying, and restrictions. So it is a priority and of significance to protect the Palestinian journalists.



Following the 27 years of issuing Windhoek Declaration in Namibia of 1991, upon which May 3rd has been selected to celebrate World Press Freedom Day. Palestinian press has to move a long way ahead to fulfill the objectives of this declaration. In terms of securing a free independent media space as a condition for press freedom, assuring the safety of journalists while practicing their work and guaranteeing a transparent investigation in the crimes of breaching press freedom.

"SHAMS" Center **Puts emphasis** that freedom of press, opinion and expression is considered a significant fundamental for strengthening the basic rights & freedoms. While other rights are deeply connected with it since press freedom is the first step to guarantee enjoying other rights. It is the mirror for public rights & freedoms and democracy. It represents a standard to measure the democracy of the political system, it contributes to enhancing basics for the state of law, and it is a genuine measurement which reflects the availability of a political will to guarantee public freedoms in line with international standards for human rights.

Additionally, Freedom of press, opinion & expression and the right to access information are essential elements to move towards modern community.

Hence, freedom of expression & press represent indispensable condition for the civil political participation. Besides, freedom of press, opinion & expression are the bases for all liberties and enable citizens to enjoy the liberty based on fulfilling self-actualization in addition to expression according to thinking, imagination, creativity and the attentive conscience. Moreover, freedom of opinion, press & expression contribute to achieving good governance and strengthening its basics in terms of transparency, accountability and oversight. And to enhancing values of tolerance, equality, and dialogue in the community which are only guaranteed within the freedom of opinion, press & expression.

"SHAMS" Center **extends** greeting and salutes to journalists, media representatives and bloggers who support their job and defend the concerns of their nations honestly. The center salutes Palestinian and foreign journalists in addition to Arabic and International news agencies who aim at delivering the truth and revealing Israeli violations against the Palestinian people. Who have been capable to deliver the message professionally and objectively, and who conveyed the images in an influential manner. At the meantime, we rely on the empathy of the public opinion and standing by our side.

"END"