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A statement issued by "SHAMS" center to mark 1 May, International Labour Day

A statement for immediate release

Issued by the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center "SHAMS"

Calling for the follow up of labour issues and stressing the preservation of their rights

"SHAMS" Center salutes the Palestinian workers and global workforce at their annual appreciation day, which comes this year under exceptional and hard circumstances due to the outbreak of the Corona pandemic. This virus has Raised levels of unemployment, and definitely levels of poverty, marginalization and all kinds of suffering, to unprecedented rates. The families most affected by the pandemic are the most vulnerable families, among which are the families of workers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially daily day laborers and Palestinian workers in the occupying country.

"SHAMS" Center recalls the Israeli colonial violations against Palestinian workers represented in maltreatment on barriers, discrimination in pay, social rights, and suffering due to permit brokers and working in a dangerous environment where safety measures are absent. Violent pursuit, shooting at them, abuse and insults against them and raiding their workplaces in search of them and their suffering with overnight conditions, as they are forced to sleep in the open or buildings under construction, in farms or water ferries. Violations extend to the non-provision of treatment in the event of an infection or illness even in light of the Corona virus outbreak, which was evident in the case of the Palestinian worker Malik Ghanem from the city of Nablus, who was thrown in a humiliating manner at the Beit Sira military checkpoint on suspicion of being infected with the Corona virus. This expresses a violent racist policy followed against Palestinian workers and the way in which the worker is considered as part of the wheel of economy, away from humanitarian standards.

In view of the Corona virus outbreak, "SHAMS" Center calls on all parties to assume their responsibilities towards Palestinian workers who find themselves in a challenge



facing a difficult trade-off between the need to safeguard theirs, their families and their community's health and earn a living for their families. This situation has been caused by the high rates of infection with the Corona virus in the occupying country, leaving them vulnerable to enormous social pressures and security harassment to prevent them from going to their workplaces and making livings. It is worth noting that strict preemptive actions have been taken against returnees of them. In the general context, a hate speech against workers besides unfounded "disloyal" theories were deployed against workers, that incited them on the one hand, and the sense of isolation, injustice, and boycott they experienced on the other hand, and many quarrels with them occurred in their areas and villages.

"SHAMS" Center views with concern the cumulative negative economic indicators among the Palestinian labors working in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as the poverty rate among individuals in Palestine totaled 30% depending on their consumption patterns, and the unemployment rate is 25%, which rates are likely to multiply several times with the new Corona crisis. According to the latest statistics of the Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of workers in 2019 in the State of Palestine amounted to 1,010,400. After declaring the state of emergency, the percentage of operating establishments was 26.2% of the total number of establishments, so that these establishments employ 105,345 workers out of 424,904 workers, and the prices of many commodities & services increased, thus complicating the crisis and distress, especially in the entry of the holy month of Ramadan, which is a social-religious occasion that requires a reasonable economic capacity, with expectations of actual GDP recession. This threatens to produce a broader situation in which poverty becomes more brutal and the suffering of the poor and marginalized families increases. The suffering affects females working in kindergartens and nurseries, and Palestinian female workers in the settlements.

"SHAMS" Center recommends the need for the Ministry of Labour and the National Wage Commission to undertake their role in the implementation of the current minimum wage (1450) NIS, and the announcement of a new minimum wage that matches with cost-of-living index and prices of commodities & services, and to and increase penalties for employers who fail to abide by this requirement according to the Palestinian Basic Law. And the need for the competent ministries to make labors a high priority in the distribution of the material and in-kind assistance, with emphasis on female workers in the nurseries who stopped working due to the Corona virus crisis. In addition, to implement national awareness-raising programs on the



risks of working in settlements, and develop a wide-ranging strategy in partnership between the government and the private sector, which consider alternatives in the Palestinian labor market, particularly for females working in settlement farms, in light of the many serious violations they are exposed to. Also, to activate the role of trade unions & workers' syndicates, thus ensuring the effective follow-up of workers' issues and the preservation and safeguarding of their rights. The center also recommends the need for all parties to fulfill their duty towards the workers, to stand by them and support them in their crisis.

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