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A statement for immediate release**Issued by the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center "SHAMS"****Peaceful assembly is safeguarded by the Constitution and the detained activists shall be released immediately**

The Human Rights and Democracy Media Center **"SHAMS"** **observes with** serious concern the accelerating wave of repression, which included the arrests of activists of the "Movement Against Corruption" against the background of organizing a peaceful protest against corruption titled "Enough is Enough" on Al-Manara roundabout in the center of Ramallah on July 19th, 2020. The number of detainees totaled (20) as per the preliminary estimates. Of whom the following names were known: Fayez Al-Suwaiti, Amer Hamdan, Jihad Abdo, Abu Naseem Qaysia, Osama Al-Azzuni, and Firas Berioch. According to the monitoring of the center's staff, members of the security services were deployed intensively in a proactive manner before the sit-in that was organized to protest corruption; they suppressed the protest and arrested the activists without observing the conditions of public safety in light of the outbreak of the Coronavirus during detention.

"SHAMS" Center **considers** the breaking up of the protest and arresting of activists a gross violation of the Palestinian Basic Law, equivalent to the Constitution Article (26) of which stipulates "Palestinians shall have the right to participate in political life, both individually and in groups. They shall have the following rights in particular: To conduct private meetings without the presence of police members and to conduct public meetings, gatherings, and processions, within the limits of the law". While Article (19) provides for "Freedom of opinion may not be prejudiced. Every person shall have the right to express his opinion and to circulate it orally, in writing or in any form of expression or art, with due consideration to the provisions of the law". The center also views these acts as a violation of the legislative support of this right through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, etc., and an indication of dangerous misplaced use of the declaration of an unconstitutional state of emergency, that the **"SHAMS"** Center warned of earlier, in



addition to the political use of this declaration to control public space and suppress rights and freedoms.

"SHAMS" Center **stresses** that violations of the right to peaceful assembly committed in the Palestinian context have become systematic and shall be stopped immediately. These violations include the arrest, summoning, assaulting, or detention of participants in peaceful assemblies by the various security services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, preventing the holding of a range of peaceful gatherings, and impeding the participants access to the meeting places, besides the dispersing of peaceful gatherings with excessive force and using unlawful violence to break up the participants.

"SHAMS" Center **calls for** the immediate release of the detained activists, in light of the gravity of detention given the spread of the Corona pandemic and the absence of its justifications, so it sounds more like arbitrary detention. The **"SHAMS"** Center calls on the political leaders to stop issuing any orders for dispersing peaceful assemblies, to avoid discrimination among citizens on the basis of party affiliation in allowing or preventing the exercise of this right, and to stop the arrest of citizens on the background of their expression of opinion and their participation in peaceful assemblies. Also, the center calls on the security establishment to carry out an immediate investigation in accordance with the law in the incident of breach and violation with real accountability and hold those who found guilty to administrative accountability, and to announce this to the public as a kind of public deterrence. The center calls for the harmonization of the Palestinian legislation regulating the right to peaceful assembly with the provisions of the international conventions signed and acceded to by Palestine, including provisions, standards, and practices, particularly the executive regulations of the Public Assemblies Act in violation of the constitution.

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