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**A statement for immediate release****Issued by the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center "SHAMS"****A high rate of death sentences passed in the Gaza Strip during the year 2020**

**"SHAMS" Center notes with much concern**, the high rate of death sentences imposed by military and regular courts in the Gaza Strip, which are supposed to be the top of the justice system, the protector of rights and freedoms, and the most respectful entities for the right to life. Despite the catastrophic events suffered by the whole world this year due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus, including the Gaza Strip, and the serious cumulative crises that the Gaza Strip faces in various fields, and the failure of the de facto authority to provide basic life services, including electricity, water, and sanitation to citizens, as a result of the Israeli colonial blockade and the successive wars on the Strip, the singularity of governance and the absence of governance procedures. Yet, the Gaza Strip courts seem to be determined to compound the problems faced by the Gaza Strip, by issuing (7) death sentences, three of which are issued by military courts, in a crude violation of the fair trial guarantees, and upholding dozens of previous penalties since the start of the year. The most recent of these was a capital punishment sentence handed down by the Khan Younis Court of First Instance against the 31-year-old citizen (S.H.) from Rafah.

**"SHAMS" Center emphasizes** that its long-standing principled position in combating the death penalty, no matter how terrible the crime committed by the convicts, does not build on disregarding the suffering endured by the victims and their families which we are in full solidarity with, It does not represent a call for our side to tolerate the convicts. But rather it comes from our understanding that the death penalty shall be replaced with another deterrent punishment that respects the humanity and dignity of the human being. Also, if the death penalty has proved to be insufficient in achieving the goals that are invoked when using this penalty in terms of ensuring deterrence and maintaining community safety, the experience, the continuation of the crime, and even its increasing frequency have shown the failure of this claim.



**In our view at "SHAMS" Center,** governments should address the root causes of crime with no allowance for of new criminals to emerge and appear, instead of permitting the continuation of the circumstances and environment that shape and increase crimes, instead of getting rid of convicts at the expense of real and difficult solutions that stem from intersectional plans & strategies of action, and absorbing the anger of the victims' families without tackling its underlying causes of their problems.

We recall that since the State of Palestine deposited its instrument of accession to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Of 1989, aiming to abolish the death penalty, on 6/6/2018, the Gaza Strip courts passed (22) death sentences in a systematic violation of Palestine's international obligations, exercised by judicial bodies.

Accordingly, we at **"SHAMS" Center call upon** the justice system, first and foremost, the judiciary in the Gaza Strip, to the immediate and total cessation of the handing down and upholding of death sentences, while requesting the de-facto authority in the Gaza Strip to develop radical and real solutions within action plans to combat crime and achieve community safety and social cohesion. It is no longer acceptable to violate the right to life for a people fighting an existential battle with colonialism since decades to extract this right, by Palestinian parties that are supposed to be the protectors of rights and freedoms.

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