



2020/5/3

A statement for immediate release Issued by the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center "SHAMS" On the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day: call for the enactment of the Right to Information Act

On the occasion of May 3 the World Press Freedom Day, "SHAMS" Center pays tribute to all Palestinian journalists, media workers, and bloggers who champion their profession, defend the concerns of their people against the Corona pandemic and against colonialism faithfully and sincerely, and who play pioneering roles in order to cover the event and deliver the news in spite of the threats to their safety, as this year comes within special and exceptional circumstances that increased the duties facing journalists, and threatened media sectors most notably the paper press caused by Corona Global Epidemic. They also constituted a tool for social accountability and civilian oversight of ministers and officials during the morning and evening press briefings, as they conveyed through their questions the concerns and worries of citizens, defended the freedom of expression of their colleagues, and held the ministers accountable for their strategies, plans and, work programs, in light of this crisis that united all spectra of our people in facing the challenge and the existential threat.

"SHAMS" Center applauds the Palestinian press and its high capability to adapt and adjust to the crisis and continue the coverage. The Palestinian media outlets resorted to modifying its programs and focused on innovation for new tools that depend on technology, applications, and digital to communicate with its journalists, guests, and the public, and transformed its programmatic content into medical and awareness-raising programs that host decision-makers, experts, physicians, and specialists, and worked to educate citizens and raise their awareness of public safety measures, which Journalists did as individuals through their personal pages also, and expressed cooperation with the official authorities in facing the pandemic in order to achieve the Palestinian interest and preserve public health. Also, it fought the idea of the scoop and rumors in discipline and professionalism, while journalists compromised on their safety in order to cover the event and succeeded in a continued presence in the field and on-site effectively.



"SHAMS" Center calls upon the World Journalists Federation to necessarily exert pressure on the Israeli occupation state to release (19) journalists in its jails, who are sentenced by actual and administrative verdicts or arrested in investigation centers and prisons, including two female media professional, in a spot suitable for the outbreak of the Coronavirus, where the spread of the virus may increase following reports on a number of Israeli investigators and prisoners being infected with the virus, while the occupation authorities haven't taken actual health and preventive measures, and the continued racist inflexibility to release the detainees, including the sick, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and women. "SHAMS" Center also salutes Palestinian journalists who have confronted the Israeli media, which promulgates hate speech and incitement against the Palestinian people, and questions its ability to address the Coronavirus and worked to expose colonial violations, even during the pandemic.

"SHAMS" Center recalls the need for launching civil & political freedoms, primarily the freedom of expression and press in Palestine, and avoiding the devastating effects of the political division by going to simultaneous general elections in a way that improves public freedoms and the working environment for journalists, and stopping the systematic Israeli attacks and violations against Palestinian journalists, notably physical assaults, arrests, travel and movement prohibitions, confiscation of equipment, destruction of content, use of journalists as shields, and the closure of Palestinian media organizations. the center calls on the Palestinian government to provide urgent and adequate support to the newspapers in coordination with its departments, so that it can secure the wages of its staffs and continue its work, and grant them urgent bank loans in case of expressing its desire to do so under reduced interest terms, and exempt them from taxes. In addition, to amend and to modernize domestic legislation and national legal frameworks regulating media work, in line with international conventions & standards, and make it more responsive to the freedom of information's requirements. These legislations interfere with the natural course of development and growth of media institutions, their role and performance, and restrict their freedom, including the enactment of the Right to Information Act.

"END"