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**A statement for Immediate Release
Issued by Human Rights and Democracy's Media Center "SHAMS"**

**"SHAMS" Center, on monitoring the first stage of local authorities' elections:
Holding the election constitutes a great motive towards holding presidential
and legislative elections.**

Human Right and Democracy Media Center "SHAMS" Congratulates the people of Palestine on the success of the first phase of the election, which was held on sat, 11/12/2021, in (154) local committee excluding the Town of Jaba', Jenin. The center appreciates the efforts of the central election committee and its members, as well as the central elections office and its executive administration and staff, The Center, as well thanks the employees of ministry of education, who have worked in dedication to conduct this successful democratic process, which took place in all of the West Bank Governorates, reflecting the great interest of the Palestinian people in practicing democracy by all its means, to choose their representative and to have an active role in making the general and public policies.

The Center Condemns the denying to hold local elections in the Gaza strip, ruled by Hamas, under pretexts aiming to procrastinate and to block the democratic process, which constitutes a confiscation and a violation for the rights of Palestinian people in the Gaza strip, however, there is still a chance to hold election in Gaza in the next stage, which requires Hamas to reconsider Holding local authorities elections in Gaza, Its is also important to hold the election in the next stage for (60) local committees which are supposed to be included in the next phase election since they did not participate in this stage.

Although the general context and the electoral scene is seemingly positive, the "SHAMS" Center staff have observed the electoral process in all of the Governorates of the West Bank, during the whole process.

The Center's Staff has observed a problem in the voting process for illiterate and disabled people, that instead of helping them to vote, their companions voted on their behalf, although the companion must be a relative from the first or second degree, this standard was not met in some cases, that sometimes employees helped them vote, which makes a violation for the electoral law. The staff also observed Police and security forces with



machine guns guarding the election centres, in addition to the continuation of the manifestations of electoral propaganda in many local bodies, including election campaigns in front of polling stations on polling day. A large number of citizens gathered inside and outside the polling stations.

Some polling centres had been overloaded with registered numbers of voters, that a centre of them had (5488) voters registered in the same polling station, while there could have been another voting centre in the same area, since there are two other schools in the same neighbourhood. "SHAMS" Center staff also observed the use of the electoral roll by some of the candidate lists, in the day of election, to verify voters who voted, and voters who still have not voted, in addition to that, many candidates were present inside the polling station during voting, which could affect the position of the voters during the voting process, the staff also noticed that there are many polling stations located at high floor levels, which could block the elders and the disabled from reaching the polling stations.

Monitoring team also monitored the absence of standardized instructions or limited knowledge of some procedural details among the supervising teams. In addition to many manifestations of gender-based electoral violence, verbal and psychological violence against persons with disabilities, and non-compliance with health measures related to the Coronavirus, whether in terms of distance or adherence to masks.

These observations and notes do not underestimate the integrity and transparency of the electoral process, but they come in the context of monitoring and evaluation process in order to be used to develop future elections, which will be detailed in a monitoring report to be prepared by "SHAMS" Center on the First phase of the local authority's election 2021.

The centre stresses that conducting the first phase election is a beginning that should be built on, and to hold the second stage of elections on 3/26/2021. The centre also sheds light on the importance of holding the presidential and legislative elections, as well as unions and chambers of commerce elections. Which would create a comprehensive electoral scene that leads to a democratic transformation that should be adopted as soon as possible.

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