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**SHAMS Center in Recognition of International Day of Democracy:  
Organizing General Elections  
The Threshold to Build a Civic State**

Ramallah: Human Rights and Democracy Media Center- SHAMS, emphasizes the necessity that the Palestinian representative institutions should be built on democratic and constitutional principles. The Center affirms the necessity to enhance the democratic and good governance structures as well as the peaceful transfer of power. Additionally, the Center confirms the necessity to respect human rights and democracy. SHAMS Center affirms the necessity to respect the principles of equality, justice, solidarity, and the rule of law as well as respecting people's right to participate in the decision-making process. These demands were raised, by the Center, in a statement released in recognition of the International Day of Democracy.

SHAMS Center affirms that Democracy, through all its manifestations, should go side by side with the Palestinian national struggle to liberate from the occupation. There is a need to democratize the Palestinian representative institutions by arranging public elections and embodying the principle of peaceful transfer of power. Transferring power is the core of any democratic process and that could be through arranging periodical transparent elections to ensure respect for the principles of freedom and human rights. Elections are the basis of protecting the right to freedom of opinion and the right to participate, for all. Additionally, elections enable individuals to participate in forming representative bodies such as trade unions, syndicates, and other entities that are associated with defending individuals' constitutional rights.

SHAMS Center believes that arranging the public elections (presidential and legislative) in Palestine is a must now. It is a national necessity to re-activate the democratic life and peaceful transfer of power currently, in accordance with the Palestinian Basic Law (Constitution) and the decree-law (1/ 2007) and its amendments, which are concerned with arranging public elections. Palestinians should enjoy the right to elect their representatives to the various representative institutions, in accordance with Article 2 of the Palestinian Basic Law. According to the Basic Law, people serve as the resource of legitimacy, and elections, on a related level, contribute to enabling youth to participate in the decision-making process. Additionally, elections stand as a tool to legalize the various Palestinian representative institutions and embody the principle of authority separation as well as the principle of accountability that is associated with the legislative institution. Elections obligate the executive and judiciary authorities to respect people's right to freedom of opinion/expression. Likewise, elections obligate the State of Palestine to respect the international principles of human rights including those affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Civic and Political Rights, on all levels, to ensure human dignity.

SHAMS Center calls upon all the political and civic powers for the necessity to work on unifying the efforts to lobby decision-makers to reactivate the democratic life in Palestine and democratize the Palestinian political regime. There is a need to restructure the Palestinian political regime in a manner that ensures people's participation in electing their representatives. The elected Palestinian institutions should work on issuing a modern legal set that is capable of contributing to building a Palestinian state that respects



democratic principles and people's right to participate. The struggle is not divided and the national struggle to end the occupation is connected with the struggle to ensure the respect of human rights and democratic principles. There is a need to ensure respect for the human rights set of all Palestinians and enable all Palestinians to contribute in building a sovereign independent state where individuals' rights and dignity are protected.

END