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In Recognition of the International Day of Human Rights Defenders

SHAMS Center Condemns Targeting HRDs by the Israeli Occupation

Human Rights and Democracy Media Center- SHAMS, strongly condemns the profound violations, crimes, and atrocities committed by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. This includes human rights defenders and workers in the field of human rights, who have been targeted for killing and displacement along with their families. The Center also denounces the bombing of the headquarters of human rights, feminist, and civil institutions.

SHAMS Center emphasizes, on the International Day for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1998 on the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the necessity to protect Human Rights Defenders. It underscores the need to protect human rights defenders in accordance with the declaration, which clearly stated (in the Preamble) that human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interconnected. It emphasized the fair and just promotion of these rights, with the responsibility and duty of all countries to enhance and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Individuals and groups are also responsible for promoting and defining human rights at both the local and international levels. As articulated in Article 1 of the declaration, "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels." This imposes duties on all components of society, whether official institutions, civil society, individuals, associations, or parties, to fulfill their responsibilities towards enhancing and protecting human rights in society and safeguarding those who defend them.

SHAMS Center salutes the human rights defenders who have returned awards received from the governments of France and Germany. These defenders include Ms. Azza Suliman- Egypt, Ms. Rajaa Omar- Egypt, Mr. Abdullah Al-Khuneini- Kuwait, Mr. Mohamed Lotfy- Egypt, El Nadim Center For Management & Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence- Egypt, Ms. Lina Atallah- Egypt, Zoya and Rihana- Lebanon, Mr. Issam Younis- Palestine, Ms. Hadeel Abdulaziz- Jordan, and Ms. Sama Aweida- Palestine. They have taken a principled stance, unwavering and beyond doubt, aligning with their conscience, nationality, and professional integrity. These individuals, who have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to their principles, have returned the awards to the governments of Germany and France in a commendable act. This gesture stands as a clear expression of their rejection and condemnation of the positions taken by those countries in support of the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip.

SHAMS Center condemns the harassment and violations of the basic rights of human rights defenders in the Palestinian territory by the occupying state. It also denounces similar actions taking place worldwide, where states and their executive agencies tighten the noose on human rights defenders and political opponents through arrests, torture, and the imposition of policies aimed at silencing dissent. This includes the issuance of regulations and laws that restrict freedom of opinion and expression, political repression,



the dissolution of parties and associations, the trial of political dissidents, physical assaults, torture, and executions.

Moreover, it criticizes the restriction of media freedoms, the withdrawal of licenses from media institutions, the suppression of peaceful protests, shrinking the civic space, the suspension of constitutional order, and the imposition of emergency laws in many countries around the world, especially in the Middle East region.

SHAMS Center condemns the actions of some European countries, which involve assaults on human rights defenders organizing peaceful protests in solidarity with the Palestinian people. These countries engage in attacking and arresting demonstrators, as well as imposing bans on peaceful protests and gatherings that condemn the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. The stances of these European countries reveal a double standard in their approach to the human rights set and democratic and liberal values. They expose their colonial, aggressive policies that support the Israeli occupation, its crimes, and its repressive practices in the occupied Palestinian territory.

SHAMS Center also called for the necessity of establishing local mechanisms to protect human rights defenders. With the outbreak of numerous wars and conflicts, serious violations of human rights are escalating noticeably. This is attributed to the exploitation of the conditions of wars and conflicts by the parties involved, allowing them to commit severe violations of human rights with impunity. The lack of mandatory international and local mechanisms for prosecuting these criminals, both at the local and international levels, contributes to this situation.

Shams" Center emphasizes that the assault on human rights defenders constitutes a grave violation of international human rights law, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. These instruments affirm the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the obligation to adhere to the legal and legislative framework applicable in the countries that have signed these treaties.

This framework includes provisions for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, aligning with the global trend of safeguarding the general rights and freedoms of all individuals, especially the protection of minorities and marginalized groups in societies (such as women, children, religious and ethnic minorities), regardless of colour, gender, race, language, religion, national origin, or political opinion

SHAMS Center reminds that the celebration of the International Day for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders is nothing but a significant occasion to remember the thousands of victims among human rights defenders who have been executed by authoritarian regimes. It is also an opportunity to recall the thousands of detainees who have been thrown into prisons for raising their voices to defend human rights and dignity. These individuals have endured torture, violence, and deprivation due to their noble stances in advocating for human rights. Furthermore, there are those whose salaries have been cut, and they have been targeted in their livelihoods, affecting the well-being of their children, all because of their courageous advocacy for human rights, dignity, and fundamental freedoms.



In conclusion of its press statement, SHAMS Center calls on the United Nations, all governments, and governmental and non-governmental organizations to unify their efforts through collective action to protect human rights defenders. It urges the monitoring and documentation of the daily violations they face by law enforcement bodies worldwide, considering such actions as crimes against humanity that transcend borders and do not fall under the statute of limitations. The Center emphasizes the necessity of prosecuting anyone proven to have committed an assault or crime against human rights defenders globally.