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SHAMS Center:
The Ongoing Aggression on the Gaza Strip and Displacing Palestinians
Transferred the Shelters as Another Cause of Death

Human Rights and Democracy Media Center- SHAMS, affirms that Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the excessive use of force, including using internationally prohibited weapons with significant destructive power, have forced Palestinian citizens to leave their homes and they were displaced under the threat of weapons. The destruction of houses and other civic facilities, especially in northern areas, has led to severe overcrowding in originally limited shelter areas. This, coupled with the destruction of several of these centers, has compelled citizens to move to other areas in the south, surpassing their capacity by far. This has created a favorable environment for the spread of diseases and epidemics, putting immense pressure on the existing services. The Center also warned that the severe overcrowding in shelters and displacement camps in the Gaza Strip, forms a fertile soil for the spread of diseases and epidemics, posing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in the entire Gaza Strip. Urgent intervention from international organizations and the international community is required to halt this deterioration. The center stated that these epidemics constitute another cause of death among the displaced, in addition to famine. Currently, over 1.9 million Palestinian citizens in the Gaza Strip, approximately 85% of the population, including a majority of children, are residing in shelters and displacement camps. This is happening amidst the loss of essential healthcare services, the absence of drinkable water, and the destruction of sewage infrastructure, presenting a grave humanitarian and environmental crisis due to the rampant spread of diseases and epidemics in displacement camps and shelters. This is a result of the brutal aggression carried out by the occupation forces on the Gaza Strip.

SHAMS Center warns that the significant overcrowding in shelters, especially schools, and their surroundings, provides a conducive environment for the spread of seasonal diseases, particularly respiratory infections such as colds, influenza, and other infectious viruses. It also poses a risk of epidemics resulting from pollution, especially cholera, diarrhea, and other diseases caused by water pollution, particularly among children. Reports from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) indicate that around 170,000 children in shelters are suffering from severe respiratory infections. This is occurring within a severe and worsening crisis where shelters are receiving large numbers far exceeding their capacity. This is accompanied by a severe shortage of basic needs and services, the absence of sanitary facilities capable of accommodating such large numbers of displaced individuals, and the lack of water, food, and medicine. Warnings from the World Food Programme (WFP) highlight the imminent threat of famine facing the people of the Gaza Strip, especially those in shelters and displacement camps, amidst rising cases of drought, malnutrition, and the spread of diseases, especially among children. A survey conducted by the WFP showed that between 83% and 97% of families in Gaza do not consume sufficient food, and in some areas, up to 90% of families go without any meal for an entire day and night.

SHAMS Center emphasizes that the conditions of displaced individuals in shelters and displacement camps have reached a disastrous and tragic situation, both in terms of livelihood and health. In addition to the lack of necessary healthcare, there is a significant shortage of winter clothing, blankets, bedding, and heating materials that protect the displaced from severe cold. Moreover, thousands of displaced



individuals in shelters, including those with special needs, the wounded, the sick, pregnant women, and those requiring specialized care due to their complex health conditions, are experiencing tremendous suffering.

The Center condemns the blockade and closure imposed by the Israeli occupation on the Gaza Strip, preventing the entry of water, electricity, food, medicine, and fuel into the region. This has led to a suffocating humanitarian crisis, serving as a form of collective punishment against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The international silence on this oppressive blockade reveals the double standards and selectivity employed by world nations in dealing with the human rights set and humanitarian needs, as well as the dignity of individuals.

SHAMS Center affirms that the spread of diseases and epidemics, coupled with the unavailability of necessary treatment due to the blockade, the destruction of hospitals and medical centers, and pollution resulting from the Israeli occupation's aggression on the Gaza Strip, constitutes a serious violation of international human rights law regarding the right to live in a healthy and clean environment. This particularly violates the Constitution of the World Health Organization of 1946, which defines the right to health as "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health". Moreover, it violates the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, as Article 12 of the Covenant stipulates that states parties should take necessary measures to secure the full exercise of the right to health. These measures include improving all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene, preventing and treating epidemics and other diseases, and ensuring medical services and care for everyone in the case of illness. Additionally, it contravenes international humanitarian law, especially Article 17 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states that parties to the conflict must establish arrangements for the transfer of the wounded, sick, disabled, elderly, children, and maternity cases from besieged areas, as well as the passage of medical personnel to these areas.

The Center calls upon the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, UNICEF (dedicated to child protection), governmental and non-governmental organizations, and international human rights organizations to fulfill their humanitarian duties. It urges urgent intervention to deliver food aid, medical supplies, and necessities to the displaced individuals in the Gaza Strip. The Center emphasizes the need to ensure the neutrality of humanitarian aid convoys, shielding them from being targeted by the Israeli occupation. It also calls for pressure on the occupying government to cease targeting hospitals, health centers, shelters, and displacement camps in Gaza, urging neutralizing them from military operations and conflict zones.