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SHAMS Center

Targeting the Municipalities Quarters in the Gaza Strip by the Israeli Occupation A New Policy to Increase People's Suffering and Agony.

Ramallah: Human Rights and Democracy Media Center- SHAMS, asserts that targeting and destroying the headquarters and premises of the municipalities in the Gaza Strip is a new policy applied by the Israeli Occupation to increase people's suffering and agony. The Center asserted that the Israeli occupation is currently targeting the municipalities intentionally to increase the suffering of people. Targeting the municipalities came following targeting the governmental institutions and services resources. Palestinians are currently left with no official institutions to provide them with services even though they are living under ongoing war and aggression. The Israeli forces are intentionally targeting the civic objects and all civil essentials and assets. In this sense, the Israeli army is currently targeting the municipalities in the Gaza Strip where the latest target in this regard was Rafah Municipality Building. Municipalities are the official institutions that provide services for Palestinians within their daily life to contribute to eliminating their suffering as a result of the ongoing war and daily shelling.

SHAMS Center warned of the spreading of pandemics and infectious diseases as a result of the absence of municipalities' services and the flooding of the sewage system in the streets leading to polluting the drinking water resources. Environment and health catastrophes are likely to occur currently causing the spread of diseases and other pandemics. The health situation in the Gaza Strip is extremely critical and risky. Many infectious diseases are reappearing once again in the Gaza Strip though they disappeared from the world since many years. These diseases reappear due to polluting the environment's three elements: air, water, and soil. In addition to that, garbage and waste materials fill the streets and are close to the shelters because the services of municipalities and local councils are entirely paralyzed.

The Center condemned the systematic targeting of the civic objects and assets in the Gaza Strip including houses, governmental buildings, health facilities, schools, universities, mosques, churches, cultural centers, and archaeological sites. The war resulted in destroying 150 thousand residential units entirely, while another 200 thousand units were partially destroyed. More than 614 mosques were destroyed while 214 were partially destroyed. Similarly, the Israeli army destroyed 3 churches. 34 hospitals, 80 health centers and 162 health facilities were pushed out of service as a result of the Israeli aggression. 198 governmental facilities were entirely demolished as well as demolishing 206 archaeological sites (all are entirely demolished). Around 700 water wells were demolished and are no longer used. 121 schools and universities were entirely demolished while another 333 schools and universities were partially demolished. 131 ambulances and first aid vehicles were destroyed¹.

The Center deplores the international silence against the Israeli crimes in the Gaza Strip, which target Palestinians in a clear ethnic cleansing war. Palestinians are to select one out of two choices: either enforced displacement or genocide. The occupation tends to eradicate the Palestinian identity and kill

¹ This data was extracted from the reports of the Governmental Press Office in the Gaza Strip.



Palestinians using all available means of killing and destruction. The silence of the world reveals the applied policy of double standards by the countries that keep arguing for the values of democracy, human rights and social justice. The world does not move a finger to stop the genocide crimes committed by the occupation against Palestinians. Not only that but also some countries align with the occupation by providing political coverage in the United Nations institutions or providing materialistic support to the occupation through the shipments of weapons and lethal to proceed in the ethnic cleansing war committed against Palestinians.

SHAMS Center stresses that targeting civil objects, mainly the municipalities, is a profound violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In particular, the occupation violates the Hague Convention (1907): Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land. Article 56 of the given Convention states: "The property of municipalities, that of institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences, even when State property, shall be treated as private property. All seizure of, destruction or wilful damage done to institutions of this character, historic monuments, works of art and science, is forbidden, and should be made the subject of legal proceedings". Article 27 of the same Convention states: "In sieges and bombardments all necessary steps must be taken to spare, as far as possible, buildings dedicated to religion, art, science, or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals, and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not being used at the time for military purposes". The Occupation violates the Rome Statutes (the Constitute of the International Criminal Court), as Article 8 considered a war crime all "Intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives".

SHAMS Center called on the United Nations Security Council, the UN General Assembly, UNESCO, the Human Rights Council, and governmental/ non-governmental organizations to fulfill their humanitarian and legal responsibilities by taking urgent action and pressuring the occupying government to stop targeting civilian objects, especially municipalities and their properties that provide humanitarian and civil services to citizens, and that have no military or political nature. It also called for obliging the occupying government to comply with the rules of international humanitarian law