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SHAMS Center:**The Collapse of the Health System and the spread of Diseases and Epidemics in the Gaza Strip warns of a Major Humanitarian Disaster.**

Human Rights and Democracy Media Center- SHAMS, asserts that the collapse of the health system and the spread of diseases and epidemics in the Gaza Strip, warns of a major humanitarian disaster. The Center added that the symptoms of such a disaster started to appear through the widespread of infectious diseases among the citizens. More than 700 thousand affected cases were documented to be affected by Infectious and epidemic Diseases. Among these cases, there are 8 thousand of (Hepatitis A) among which, there are 7 thousand cases of children, 234 thousand cases of Pneumonia, and 17 thousand cases of Diarrhea. There are other diseases resulting from the lack of cleaning material and lack of water for showering, where 14 thousand cases of skin diseases were documented. The spread of the diseases results from the hard circumstances in which displaced persons are living and the crowd in the shelters. Even those who are still in the houses, there is a crowd in these houses. People face a shortage of drinkable water and water for personal cleaning. Additionally, there is a shortage of food, medicine, and medical supplies. The Israeli army destroyed the sewage system networks and people do not find places to clean their bodies. Garbage spreads in the shelters and the places to where people were displaced and because it is not possible to isolate diseased persons from others, infectious diseases spread quickly.

SHAMS Center affirms that the intentional destruction of the hospitals and medical centers and the medical infrastructure in addition to killing and arresting medical cadres, made the health system behind the possibility of facing the spreading diseases and epidemics. According to the official reports of the Ministry of Health, the Israeli occupation killed more than 364 members of the medical cadres and arrested another 269 members. The Occupation demolished more than 155 health facilities and 32 hospitals and 53 health centers are out of service as a result of the attacks of the occupation. More than 126 ambulances were destroyed. More than 32 thousand persons were killed as a result to the aggression in addition to more than 74 thousand wounded. The Israeli occupation is still imposing a restricted siege on the Gaza Strip and denying the entry of life essentials (food, water, medicine, medical supplies, and fuel). Within these circumstances, people are still fleeing their houses and heading towards Rafah, in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. The shelters in Rafah are heavily crowded now with the lack of infrastructure and drinking water, which warns that a human disaster is approaching. The expected disaster might cause thousands of victims among civilians and displaced persons.

The Center condemns the decision of the Israeli authorities to ban the volunteering relief teams and the international health organizations that are stuck at Rafah border point, from entering into the Gaza Strip. Banning these teams from entry is based on false and inhuman justifications. At the same time, Israel is going on with its aggression against the health facilities and banning



the medical teams from working inside the Gaza Strip. Moreover, the restricted siege is still imposed on the Gaza Strip and preventing the entry of food supplies and medicine, and other life essentials. All these crimes are taking place while the international community is silent and some countries are aligning with the occupation in its attack and crimes against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

SHAMS Center confirms that targeting the health sector in the Gaza Strip caused the collapse of this sector and the spread of diseases. Attacking the health sector violates the international humanitarian law, particularly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25 of the Declaration states: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control". Additionally, Israel violates the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights as Article 12 of the Covenant states: "The prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases and the creation of conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness". Furthermore, the Occupation is violating the Geneva Fourth Convention (12/8/1949). Article 16 of the Convention states: "The wounded and sick, as well as the infirm, and expectant mothers, shall be the object of particular protection and respect". Article 17 of the given Convention states: "The Parties to the conflict shall endeavor to conclude local agreements for the removal from besieged or encircled areas, of wounded, sick, infirm, and aged persons, children and maternity cases, and for the passage of ministers of all religions, medical personnel and medical equipment on their way to such areas". In the same regard, Article 18 of the Convention states: "Civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases, may in no circumstances be the object of attack, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict". The crimes of the Occupation violate Article 24 of the Geneva First Convention, which states: "Medical personnel exclusively engaged in the search for, or the collection, transport or treatment of the wounded or sick, or in the prevention of disease, staff exclusively engaged in the administration of medical units and establishments, as well as chaplains attached to the armed forces, shall be respected and protected in all circumstances".

SHAMS Center urges the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Health and Human Rights, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and governmental and nongovernmental organizations to fulfill their legal and moral responsibilities. They should exert pressure on the Occupation to allow the entry of relief aids and essential life supplies into the Gaza Strip. The occupation must be lobbied to allow the entry of the medical teams into the Gaza Strip and, at the same time, to stop targeting civilians: children, women, and elderly people.