

## Briefing Note

### Amplifying Palestinian women's voices for human rights, justice and peace

On the occasion of the 27<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council (HRC), a delegation of representatives of Palestinian and international women organizations descended on Geneva between 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September. With a high sense of urgency, the delegation called upon the HRC and all member states to live up to their responsibilities to put an end to Israel's impunity, uphold International Law, and bring justice to Palestinian victims of the latest assault on the Gaza Strip. Their message was clear and loud: "Enough is enough: Palestinians need justice, protection, freedom and dignity!"



Palestinian women are not alone in this call, as the past weeks have seen hundreds of thousands of citizens around the globe coming onto the streets to demand an end to the violence and bloodshed. As the conscience of their nations, ordinary citizens have called upon their governments to stop looking away, to live up to their legal and moral obligations, and use their political powers to stop the madness. The question is: Will their governments listen this time?

Human Rights are not selective; they apply to all people at all times regardless of nationality, race, religion or gender, and must be applied without discrimination. The Goldstone report following Israel's assault on Gaza of 2009 has shown that the Palestinian population has been disproportionately impacted by violations of international humanitarian law. Despite its clear recommendations, none of these were followed through by the Member States; leaving the former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, to question whether a different response could have prevented the latest onslaught in Gaza.

During their visit to the HRC, the women delegation met with representatives of 16 Member States; UN agencies; as well as members of the independent Commission of Inquiry. Their message was clear: Human Rights are not selective; they apply to all. Creating or allowing for double standards by politicizing them cannot be tolerated. Not only does it lead to the chronic loss of Palestinian lives and destruction of their land, property, and livelihood; it undermines the normative framework of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights altogether, ultimately rendering it completely meaningless. When exceptions become the norm, the human dignity and security of all is at stake.

The Human Rights of the Palestinians are chronically gravely violated, leaving them without any protection as the recent outbursts of violence have shown (see also: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6Xk1fd1b58&list=UUpTuMfNmldUPDd-6xk\\_yzqQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6Xk1fd1b58&list=UUpTuMfNmldUPDd-6xk_yzqQ)).

The delegation pointed out that Member States have the responsibility to uphold other states to their obligations under international law. The women warned that failing to adhere to and uphold international humanitarian law creates a dangerous vacuum, as it contributes to creating a breeding ground for extremist and violent voices and responses everywhere – not only in the Occupied State of Palestine and Israel, but ultimately also in the wider region and even on a global scale. With the 27<sup>th</sup> of September - the day the ceasefire ends - around the corner, the clock is ticking, leaving the people in Gaza in a state of mental torture as they await what's next. The delegation made an urgent plea for international protection for the civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in order to prevent more human rights violations. They also called for the inclusion of women in the resolution of the conflict. Though women have been severely affected, and are drivers of peace and human rights activism on civil society level, they continue to be excluded from any formal processes – as also witnessed during the latest ceasefire negotiations in Egypt.

For the women's recommendations: see <http://www.wilpfinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Final-recommendations.doc>

The delegation was convened by WILPF International, consisting of delegates from the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development; the Women Affairs Technical Committee; the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH); Women Peacemakers Program, Palestine Link, Oxfam Novib, and Kvinna til Kvinna.

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