

Statement on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
29/11/2018

Today, 29th of November, the World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA) and its member association, the YWCA of Palestine, call on individuals globally, to observe the annual International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. Since 1947, this has also been the day, we commemorate the UN General Assembly Resolution 181, that calls for the partition of Palestine into two states: one for the Jewish people and one for the Arab Palestinians.

Resolution 181 demands that Palestinians have the right to national independence and a sovereign state, and yet, after more than seventy years (70 years), Palestinian people continue to be forcibly displaced from their homes and lands and robbed of their right to self-determination. We; therefore, remind the Member States of the United Nations that you have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that this resolution becomes a reality.

After 11 years, Gaza continues to live under Israeli siege. Almost 2 Million Palestinians cannot leave Gaza, and just this year, hundreds have been killed and over 24,000 have been injured in the context of the "Great March of Return" near the fence. Violence against Palestinians continues to escalate, particularly against young people, who are key agents of change for peace building processes and for a sustainable future which promotes justice, respect and security.

Today there are over 8,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails, living in the most inhuman conditions, and child detention continues in record numbers. Furthermore, the ongoing Israeli policy of forced transfer and displacement through home demolitions and evictions along with revoking of residency rights directly affects women's sense of security and freedom. We, the World YWCA and the YWCA of Palestine demand that human rights and international law be affirmed and protected for all. We support Palestine's right to self-determination as guaranteed in UN Resolution 242 and as affirmed in Resolution 338. In addition, as one of the largest women's movements in the world, we affirm the role of women and young women in peace building and conflict resolution at all levels as detailed in UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

The World YWCA is a movement that includes women and young women from different backgrounds and faiths to create justice, gender equality and a more peaceful world. We therefore express our deep concern with unilateral decisions that aggravate tensions in the Middle East like recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by moving embassies to this holy city. This not only affirms illegal settlement expansion, but also violates international law and several UN Resolutions, including the Geneva Convention and the Oslo Agreement, which demand that the status of Jerusalem must not change until final peace negotiations. It also diminishes efforts to find a solution and has refuelled acts of violence that reinforces conflict.

Recently this year, and within the framework of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, the YWCA of Palestine organized an International Conference to draw national and international attention to the situation of Palestinian youth under Occupation. As a young woman from the YWCA movement who had the opportunity to participate in the conference

and to witness the reality of struggle, insecurity and fear that Palestinian youth live on a daily basis, I am honoured to stand here today and bring their voices calling for freedom.

I therefore quote a message of hope from a young girl activist named Janna, she said: *“We have no choice but to believe that peace will be a reality one day, and we as young people are not a small part of that change to achieve freedom, we are the whole change and the generation that can free the world” We need to keep hope alive.*

In the closing statement of the YWCA conference, youth delegates called on all countries that have a binding agreement with the Geneva Accords to uphold their duties to protect Palestinian young people under occupation, and to hold accountable the perpetrators of violations and violators of International law. We believe that it is critical to have youth voices be a part of this process and the numerous deliberations. The world has a responsibility towards youth across the world and the stories and narratives lived by the youth should be key in making decisions about their lives.

Today we stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers from Palestine and we reconfirm that there can be no justice and peace and no potential for sustainable development and a future that offers hope for youth under Israeli Occupation. We thus reconfirm our commitment to work and support them until the occupation becomes history.

On this day, we:

- Call for the End of Israeli Occupation and support the Palestinians to establish their independent sovereign State. There can be no peace, security and justice under Occupation;
- Demand that governments implement all the above mentioned UN resolutions pertaining to Palestine and consider and enforce all economic, political and cultural rights for Palestinians;
- Call for the freedom of all detainees held under administrative detention, especially women youth and children;
- Call on the international community to support the global boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement to put economic pressure on Israel until it respects international law;
- Continue to support the International Criminal Court's investigation into possible war crimes committed in Gaza in 2014, as well as the crimes against humanity in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The international community has a moral obligation to act. In fact, refusing to act is a form of accepting and condoning Israel's refusal to respect international law. We call on the United Nations to implement its own resolutions on Palestine, and call on all of you to have the courage to stand up for the Palestinian rights of equality, freedom, dignity, and security.