Joint Statement by 48 Human Rights Organizations: International and Arab failure to prevent the annihilation of the Palestinian people must end

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A Joint Statement by 48 Human Rights Organizations from Eight Arab Countries

The undersigned Arab human rights organizations call on permanent member states of the United Nations Security Council and member states of the League of Arab States to take immediate action to prevent the situation in Gaza from developing into the crime of genocide against Palestinian civilians. The undersigned organizations urge these countries to assume their legal and political responsibility, and urgently submit to the Security Council a draft resolution within the framework of Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, immediately secure safe humanitarian passages to deliver vital aid, and put an end to Israel's use of starvation as a tactic of war.

The outbreak of the bloody events in Israel and Palestine began on 7 October 2023. American President Joe Biden, his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak have made numerous irresponsible political statements affirming Israel's absolute right, unconditional to respect international law, to defend itself in response to Hamas attacks. Biden, Macron, and Sunak have not prioritized the protection of civilians, as required by international humanitarian law and the laws of war. They have further disregarded the principles of proportionality and distinction, which are applied in armed conflicts to limit harm and damage to the civilian population and civilian infrastructure as a result of military operations and must be taken into consideration before directing military strikes.

Some of these countries have materially reinforced their irresponsible political statements by sending war fleets, even after the occupation army began its retaliatory operations, directing its military strikes against Palestinian civilians, and United Nations schools, hospitals, and shelters in violation of all international laws. The Israeli attacks have caused massive destruction of civilian infrastructure, and horrific injuries among civilians, including children and women. This dangerous unconditional support did not diminish even after public statements by Israeli political and military leaders calling for the forced displacement of civilians in Gaza, and threatening genocidal crimes against the Palestinians, described as "human animals" by Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. Governments from the Arab region and international community alike have failed to condemn such inflammatory and dehumanizing rhetoric, which incites violence and genocide against the Palestinians. These governments' silence greenlights Israel's continued perpetration of crimes against civilians in Gaza and the West Bank, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

On 18 October, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi responded in a statement to Israel's plan to forcibly displace Palestinians from their lands, suggesting that they should be displaced to the Negev Desert and not to Sinai; announcing his understanding of Israel's goal of liquidating resistance to the occupation without addressing the need to end the occupation. The majority of Arab governments have failed to use their economic, political, diplomatic, and moral resources and tools to pressure Israel and its allies to lift the siege on Gaza, ensure a ceasefire, and prevent a war of annihilation.

The League of Arab States failed to address the blockade imposed on Gaza, including Israel's use of starvation as a method of warfare, which constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity. On 11 October, the League of Arab States issued a weak resolution and did not include a unified Arab position on the war crimes currently being committed, including the crime of deliberate starvation of Palestinians in Gaza. Similarly, the Arab Group failed to take any initiative, whether in the Human Rights

Council, the Security Council, or the General Assembly, to issue a UN resolution or recommendation for a ceasefire or opening of humanitarian relief corridors. In the meantime, the Palestinian Authority has gradually turned into a security arm of the occupation, and currently lacks any legitimacy; it is only used by the occupation to restrict rights and freedoms in the West Bank.

The undersigned organizations unequivocally condemn the targeting and hostage-taking of Israeli and foreign civilians on 7 October, in the context of Hamas' attacks on Israel. At the same time, we stress that the heavy civilian casualties resulting from Israel's escalated response requires a different approach from the international community. The international community should examine in-depth the causes of the outbreak of violence and its recurrence, and it must also change course on the decades-long international failure to prevent Israel's repeated and escalating violations of international resolutions and agreements while defending the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and return.

The occupation authorities' crimes against the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the course of more than ten days is not a new development, but instead represents an extension of Israeli policy and practice that has been ongoing for more than half a century. Over this time, thousands of Palestinian civilians have been killed, illegal Israeli settlements have expanded, and the siege of the Gaza Strip has been prolonged for more than eighteen years in cooperation with the Egyptian government; all the while confiscating Palestinians' right to return and self-determination. According to successive UN reports, Israel has deliberately failed to conduct serious criminal investigations into the violations and crimes committed by its officials and forces against the Palestinian people, including during "Operation Protective Edge," the "Great March of Return," "Operation Guardians of the Wall," and "Operation Breaking Dawn," among other military operations. Israel continues to maintain a criminal investigation system that does not adhere to international standards, and does not conduct comprehensive, effective, independent and impartial investigations into perpetrators, including those in leadership positions, military commanders, and government officials. Israel continues to prevent access to international investigators to investigate crimes committed in the occupied territories. Numerous UN reports have indicated Israel's

comprehensive policy of demographic engineering, in which lands and resources are granted to its Jewish citizens only, after being seized from Palestinians. The Palestinian people, including refugees, are thus deprived of their basic and inalienable rights in practices amounting to the crime of apartheid, amid complete impunity.

Accordingly, the signatory Arab organizations demand:

1. All parties commit to an immediate ceasefire pursuant to an urgent UN Security Council resolution.
2. Urgent humanitarian relief corridors are secured to ensure the delivery of vital aid to the besieged population in Gaza and while transporting the injured for treatment in safe areas without threatening their ability to return to Gaza afterwards.
3. The international community to obligate Israel to stop using starvation as a tactic of war, and to ensure the immediate and unconditional supply of water, fuel and electricity to the Gaza Strip in order to preserve the lives of civilians there.
4. The opening of an urgent investigation by the International Criminal Court into all crimes committed by all parties since 7 October, ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to account and criminal justice. To ensure the impartiality of investigations, ICC investigators must be unconditionally allowed to enter all areas related to the conflict without restriction.
5. The opening of an investigation by the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Palestinian territory, to understand the root causes and motivational factors for the outbreak and recurrence of violence, including incitement, hate speech, violence and murder committed by all parties.
6. The holding of free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections in the occupied territories with the participation of all Palestinians without discrimination, ensuring that the Palestinian people choose their representatives to lead the process of achieving their right to self determination in fulfillment of international law.

Signatory organizations:

 Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

 Adala For All

 Addameer Foundation for Rights and Liberties

 Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights' safeguarding Committee Aman Against Discrimination (ADD)

 Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)

 Aswat Media Network

 Bahrain Center for Human Rights

 Baytna Organization

 BELaady Organization for Human Rights

 Caesar Families Association

 Center for Arab Unity Studies

 Center for Strategic Studies to Support Women and Children

 Committee for Justice

 Cultural Media Center-Yemen

 Defender Center for Human Rights

 Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR)

 Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)

 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)

 EgyptWide for Human Rights

 Human Rights & Democracy Media Center “SHAMS”

 HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement

 Justitia Center for legal protection of human rights in Algeria

 Law and Democracy Support Foundation (LDSF)

 Libya Crimes Watch

 Libyan Center For Freedom Of Press

 Libyan Organization for Independent Media (LOFIM)

 Maeen Center for Community Development

 Musaala Organization for Human Rights

 Mwatana for Human Rights

 National Autonomous Union of Public Administration Staff (SNAPAP)

 Palestinian Counseling center

 Palestinian Human Rights Organisation “PHRO”

 PASS Foundation – Peace for Sustainable Societies Refugees platform in Egypt

 Release me organization working with women

 SHOAA for Human Rights

 Sinai Foundation for Human Rights

 Syrian center for Media and Freedom of Expression Taafi initiative

 The Libyan center for freedom of press LCFP

 The Libyan Network for Legal Aid

 The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM)

 TUNISIAN ASSOCIATION DEFENDING INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES (ADLI) Tunisian youth league

 Union of Detainees

 Wogood for Human Security

 Yemen Future Foundation for Media and Culture Development

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