

## **Statement**

### **United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

**November 29, 2011**

#### **General Arab Women Federation, WILPF and World YWCA**

We, the General Arab Women Federation, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the World YWCA as organisations that have a long history of working on issues of peace with justice, have witnessed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948 and journeyed in solidarity with the women and girls in this region. We stand in search for lasting and durable peace with justice for all people of the world, and especially in this region on this special day, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Since the adoption in 1977 of November 29 as the annual observance of this day of solidarity, we have stood solid and expressed our quest for peace, justice and protection of human dignity. We affirm the principles and commitments on the role of women in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace building as enshrined in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

In recent days, we have witnessed a strong assertion for the recognition of a Palestinian State, with UNESCO's General Conference vote to admit Palestine as a Member State of the organisation, and Palestinian President Mr. Mahmoud Abbas' address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2011. A real international solidarity with the Palestinian women, men and children lies in creating and giving international recognition to a long overdue Palestinian State. After more than sixty years of occupation the toll of the conflict is manifest in every day life.

For decades, many UN international and humanitarian fact finding missions have visited the occupied Palestinian territory and issued innumerable reports on the impact of the current situation on civilians and especially women and children. These reports have exposed the extent of the violations of basic human rights, the continuing illegal confiscation of Palestinian lands and property, the demolishing of houses and private properties, the construction and expansion of settlements, the continuous construction of the Separation Wall, the restrictions of freedom of movement of all citizens perpetrated by the successive governments of Israel. The imposition of restrictive civil laws imposed on the Palestinian citizens of East Jerusalem lead to thousands of people losing their residency rights in their homeland, creating barriers for women and men as they seek to provide for their families and access to social and health services.

We remain concerned about the situation in Gaza which continues to be under siege, with the population suffering from a chronic state of food insecurity, deteriorating health conditions, and difficulty in accessing medications. In addition thousands of Palestinians, including women, remain prisoners in Israeli jails, subject to grievous violations of their human rights. Today, around 5.5 million Palestinians, half of the Palestinian population, continue to live in exile and are denied their right to return to their homeland, the greater number of whom are forced to live

in refugee camps bereft of the basic necessities of a dignified life, while a large number of Palestinians continue to live as disenfranchised citizens in Israel.

We have been witnessing the lack of a clear, robust, inclusive and systematic peace process, with effective participation of citizens and especially women, within the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Keeping hope alive demands consistency of the international community, United Nations and others in following on prior agreements. Such a failure of the so called peace process is inevitable as long as the basic rights for self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State are not respected and supported in accordance with the various United Nations Resolutions. **The right to self determination of the Palestinian people, like that of all peoples, is an inalienable right that is not up for negotiation, as is the right of refugees to return to their home and property.** The establishment of a sovereign and viable Palestinian State is a debt owed by the international community to the Palestinian People, a right which has awaited implementation for nearly seven decades. The United Nations, representing the will of the peoples of the world, has issued scores of resolutions affirming, and reaffirming, asserting and reasserting and confirming and reconfirming the inalienable rights of Palestinians. Yet the people of this land remain in waiting. The veto power has invariably been used by the US as a means to impede implementation of any UN resolution that condemns Israeli violations of international law and has prevented the attainment of a peaceful and just solution.

The situation has detrimental effects on the dignity, human security and economic potential of all people in the Middle East region, especially women and children. As women and men struggling to achieve peace in our troubled world, we strongly believe that peace cannot be attained without justice and the restoration of rights. This calls for addressing the roots of any problem. Deep wounds will never be cured by band aids, neither will injustice be rectified by financial aid and hollow platitudes. We must not allow another generation to grow up and raise their children under occupation.

**We therefore call on the United Nations to:**

1. Consolidate all international efforts to put an end to the occupation and protect the right of self-determination and ensure implementation of all United Nations resolutions related to Palestine and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), as well as UNSCR 1325;
2. Intervene to lift the siege over Gaza, and ensure access to services, flow of goods and medicine and thereby secure the rights of women, men and children;
3. Protect and promote the human rights of ALL women, men and children in all the OPT and their access to resources and services;
4. Hold perpetrators and violators of these rights accountable, and ensure that the Rule of Law is respected.

**We call on the International community, civil society and non governmental organisations to:**

1. Take all non violent measures necessary to lead Israel to retract from further expansion;
2. Support the campaign for boycotts, divestments and sanctions against goods and services from Israeli settlements in Palestinian land;
3. Continue solidarity campaigns within their societies and with their governments for the search for a lasting peace;
4. Encourage other non military regional bodies, like CARICOM and the African Union, to engage more visibly on the issue of peace with justice in Palestine.

We encourage the Palestinian People and Institutions to strengthen their internal cohesion for a stronger voice, as well as women's meaningful participation and agency, including other voices, in the search for democracy, peace and justice.

In conclusion we remain in solidarity with the people of Palestine, especially women and children, and will continue in our effort to contribute to a world of peace and justice for all.