



Upholding Our Right to Return and Self-Determination despite 71 Years of the Recurring Nakba

15th of May, 2019- occupied Palestine

Around 85% of indigenous Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes and lands between 1947 and 1949, and the Zionist forces took control of 78% of historical Palestine, having ethnically cleansed and destroyed about 530 villages and cities, and killed about 15,000 Palestinians in a series of mass atrocities, including more than 70 massacres. This first dreadful landmark in the history of Palestine has been since known as Al-Nakba (Catastrophe). The ethnic cleansing of indigenous Palestinians started 71 years ago and continues until today within Israel's extreme-right politics, supported by the imperial tyranny of the US administration. Palestine continues to be the only occupied state and nation in the history of mankind, and the escalating apartheid policies and human rights violations of the Israeli Occupation leave no prospects for peace in the horizon. The recurrence of Al-Nakba is morally reprehensible in light of the increasing global perspective to the security agenda and international justice which has been stigmatized by "double standards". The confiscation of land, 12-year blockade on Gaza, restrictions of movement, use of state-of-the-art weaponry and internationally banned phosphorus, massacres and genocides, and other violations are systematic atrocities that aim towards consistent dispossession of Palestinian people, in favor of altering the demographic composition of historical Palestine towards creating a Jewish State and a New Palestine as proposed in the "Deal of the Century".

Al-Nakba left very profound impacts on Palestinians in general. Politically, more than 750,000 Palestinians were internally displaced or forced to reconstitute their lives in exile. Today, more than 5 million Palestinian refugees are scattered in and outside Palestine with a historical Right to Return; of whom nearly one third live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian, Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. However, Palestinian women are the most affected by the aftermath of Al-Nakba. The occupation's violations targeting women have severe impacts on their mental, emotional, physical and economic well-being. The ongoing blockade on Gaza, use of lethal force, genocides, suffering at checkpoints, residency revocation, family displacement, house demolitions, night raids, and many other violations disproportionately affect women and leave them to bear further social burdens. According to the statistics of Addameer Association for Prisoners' Welfare and Human Rights in an article released in March 2019, "the Israeli occupation forces have detained more than 10,000 women since 1967. At present, there are 48 prisoners in Israeli jails, including 24 mothers, 7 wounded, 26 sick and one administrative detainee without charge or trial".

Al-Nakba this year coincides with the holy month of Ramadan, a holiday that started with horrendous aggression on Gaza, where the Israeli occupation forces used lethal force during the continuous strikes against civilians resulting in the martyrdom of 31 Palestinians, including four women –of whom two were pregnant, two babies, and more than 154 injured civilians. According to Defense for Children International Palestine during the 2014 war on Gaza: "The child death toll rises at an alarming rate in Gaza, the United Nations expressed

serious concern that, on average, Israeli forces killed one child every hour for the past three days". The targeting of children is premeditated and is one of the grimmest developments in war strategies the occupation had adopted throughout the agenda on gradual ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. This is alarming and should grab the attention of freedom fighters and duty bearers and UN systems across the globe because evidence has long existed on the targeting of children. In 1995, UNICEF reported that "roughly two million kids had been killed in wars over the previous decade—more children than soldiers". A year later, Graça Machel, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, declared in the first U.N. "Children in War" report: "Children are not just getting caught in the crossfire, they are also likely to be specific targets". She went on: "When ethnic loyalties prevail, a perilous logic clicks in. The escalation from ethnic superiority to ethnic cleansing to genocide, as we have seen, can become an irresistible process. Killing adults is then not enough; future generations of the enemy—their children—must also be eliminated."

Al-Nakba also coincides this year with the Eurovision Song Contest 2019 that is scheduled to take place in Israel between the 14th and 18th of May. After adopting the "Jewish Nation-State Law" in May 2018, Israel announced itself an apartheid state, and its constitution affirmed that Palestinian citizens are denied equal rights. Around a year later, Israel decides to host an internationally renowned art contest in an attempt to whitewash apartheid and cover its atrocities and war crimes against the Palestinian people. On the Nakba day, we call for holding Israel accountable and pressuring it to comply with its obligations under international law by boycotting Eurovision 2019. We affirm that this is the minimum of moral obligations in front of 71 years of Nakba and there's no neutrality in situations of injustice.

And lastly, in an interview he had with Fox News television last Saturday, the United States Middle East Envoy Jason Greenblatt said that the US administration's controversial "Deal of Century" would be finally unveiled at least after June 10th. In the frame of a domestic interpretation of the US proposal, the Deal of Century would only mean the end of the Palestinian cause; Palestinians would have to accept Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and that settlements will remain and become part of Israel- although they are illegal under international law and are a main threat in the prospect of the born dead two-state solution. Palestinians would also have to abandon historical rights like their Right to Self-Determination and Right to Return as enshrined in international law.

Therefore, on the Nakba commemoration, the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD) calls for the immediate and paramount:

- Implementation of UN resolution 194 relating to the right of return and compensation of all Palestinian Refugees, alongside its resolutions regarding the establishment of an independent Palestinian State
- Immediate end of blockade on Gaza
- Commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty which entails ending all weapons supply to Israel, and reiteration of demand for a complete and immediate military embargo on the apartheid state of Israel.

- Recognition of the Independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital, and therefore the cancelation of the American Administration's announcement of Jerusalem as capital of Israel
- End the culture of Israel's impunity. The international community must hold Israel accountable for its violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.
- Provision of protection for Palestinian women and girls according to the framework of CEDAW and UNSCR 1325.

Established in 1981, The Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD) is a Palestinian women's, mass, developmental, learning human rights organization that contributes to developing the feminist struggle within social, and developmental dimensions.