

29 November, 2016

A statement from the World YWCA and the YWCA of Palestine on the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

Today, November 29th, the World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA) and its member association, the YWCA of Palestine, join people around the world in observing the annual International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. This is also the day we commemorate the UN General Assembly Resolution 181 which in 1947 recommended dividing Palestine into two states; one for the Jewish people and one for the Arab Palestinians.

Although Resolution 181 demands that Palestinians have the right to national independence and sovereignty, this resolution has not been enforced. The Palestinian people have been forcibly displaced from their homes and lands and robbed of their right to self-determination. Today, we call on United Nations Member States to maintain peace by ensuring the Palestinian people can claim their human rights.

As we approach the 100-year old Balfour Declaration, the 70-year old Partition Plan, a half century of military occupation, and the 30-year mark since the first intifada, it is time for the international community to act.

Violence against Palestinians continues to escalate. Since 2015 alone, Israeli forces have killed more than 225 Palestinians and three foreign nationals. We are seeing renewed attacks on Christian and Muslim holy sites, and the Israelis are constructing more settlements than ever before on Palestinian land. In addition, the detention of Palestinian children continues in record numbers, with more than 1,000 detained since beginning of 2016.

For many, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 set the stage for this partition and the beginning of the colonial settler project that has not ended. This is why Palestinian Authority President Abbas has asked for an official apology from Great Britain and a call to recognize the state of Palestine.

As a global women's rights organisation that works to promote human rights for all, the World YWCA stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people and demands that UN Member States affirm and uphold human rights and international law for all. We support Palestine's right to self-determination as guaranteed in UN Resolutions 242 and 338. In addition we affirm the role of women in peace building and conflict resolution at all levels as protected in Security Council Resolution 1325. Finally, we reconfirm our commitment to working for the Right of Return for refugees as protected in UN Resolutions 181 and 194.

We demand that governments implement these UN resolutions and consider and enforce all economic, political and cultural rights. At the same time, we applaud UNESCO's recent resolution calling for the protection of all holy sites in the holy land. And we support the International Criminal Court's investigation into possible war crimes committed in Gaza in 2014, as well as possible crimes against humanity in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

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On this special day, we call on all governments and civil society to enforce and support the following seven actions:

1. To end the military occupation of the State of Palestine;
2. To end the siege of Gaza and support its reconstruction by holding Israel financially responsible;
3. To stop the forced transfer of Palestinians from their lands, especially the Bedouins from Area C;
4. To support the Right of Return for Refugees or reparations;
5. To end settlement expansion and the annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights;
6. To free all detainees held under administrative detention, especially women and children;
7. To support the global boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement to put economic pressure on Israel until it respects international law.

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 all of you to have the courage to stand up for the Palestinian rights of equality, freedom, dignity, and security.

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