

## Statement for the Women's Day Campaign by Alianza por la Solidaridad and CFTA

March 08, 2016

On this 8<sup>th</sup> of March International Women's Day, Palestinian women can be proud of themselves and celebrate loud and clear their active contribution to a more fair and equal Palestine. Despite the existence of protective international regulations, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the status of Palestinian women is at stake. They face all forms of violence on a daily basis, psychological, economical, physical or sexual, forced and early marriage, mostly in their own houses. Only in the last Israeli aggression over the Gaza Strip, 39.6 per cent of Gazan women experienced at least one of these types of domestic violence<sup>1</sup>. And 63% of these women were subjected to several forms of abuse.

The military Israeli occupation, the expansion of settlements and the forced evictions in the West Bank, the blockade and the rehearsed attacks on Gaza, the arbitrary imprisonments, are considered as flagrant violations of human rights and the international humanitarian law. This leads to a tremendous level on insecurity hardly bearable for Palestinian families. Either direct or indirect victims of the occupation, Palestinian women are in frontline regarding the escalating violence. In a conservative and patriarchal society where main roles in the public sphere of life are reserved to men, the status of women and the gender based violence constitute a challenge, which is exacerbated by the protracted occupation.

During this Women's Day, our thoughts go to those women who, by overcoming discrimination and occupation related problems, continue to play a key role in the consolidation of the Palestinian society and the building of a future for the forthcoming generations: housewives, mothers, social workers, doctors, nurses, child caregivers, business women, lawyers, teachers, politicians, activists....

It is up to the Israeli government above all, the international community, the international organizations, and also the Palestinian society as a whole, to protect Palestinian women, to enable them to live decently in a life free of violence and discrimination. All strengths must be joined to give Palestinian women the means to fully enjoy their rights and act as key drivers of development.

Alianza por la Solidaridad and CFTA's commitment in Gaza to protect and empower women survivors of violence aims at this target. We partner on an EU funded project whose aim is to provide more efficient and quality services to GBV survivors, raise awareness of the population, particularly youth and men, and promote GBV survivors' rights in all policies and legislations. The Wessal and Amal Coalitions, which represent respectively 40 CBOs and 11 women's rights NGOs in the Gaza Strip, partners of this project, play an instrumental role in defending women's rights.

Alianza por la Solidaridad and CFTA, stress clearly the following statements:

- Bring an end to the occupation in Gaza and West Bank and call for the protection of the Palestinian people in accordance with the international humanitarian law and the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva convention;

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<sup>1</sup> *Violence against women in the Gaza Strip, after the Israeli military Operation Protective Edge, 2014, Alianza por la Solidaridad & Action Aid, October 2015.*

- Involve actively Palestinian women in the peace building process with regards to the Resolution 1325, recognize the specific situation of Palestinian women in occupation and provide the forthcoming national action plan with sufficient means to lead to tangible results ;
- Support and adopt a long term approach for the activities carried out by women's organizations, and women's specialized health centers, which aim at tackling gender based discrimination, violence against women and promoting access to sexual and reproductive health services through multisectoral approaches;
- Implement concretely the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and adapt all legislation and laws, such as the Personal Status, the Penal Code, and the Labour law, on the basis of Palestine's endorsement on the Convention without any reservations.



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