

## **For immediate Release**

*March 17, 2011*

GAZA - As the world watches Arab youth all over the region rise up to demand freedom and real democracy, the Palestinian youth under occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as those living as second-class citizens in Israel, took to the streets on March 15<sup>th</sup> to do the same.

Our demands are simple: immediate unity and reconciliation among the main Palestinian political factions as well as free and fair elections. It is our belief that accomplishing this, along with an end to corruption and intimidation, are the first and most crucial steps for the Palestinian people to address once and for all the injustice, illegality and unsustainability of the Israeli occupation.

We, the Palestinian youth of the Gaza Strip, answered this call, and poured onto the streets in the hundreds of thousands to non-violently protest our current predicament. Sadly, we were met with repression from those forces that claim to be achieving our liberation and we have been under Hamas attacks ever since March 15 for the crime of asking for new elections to hasten the long overdue creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Our demands were made and all political parties in Gaza joined us. We suddenly found Hamas internal security attacking us wherever we went, even within Al Azhar University. They entered the university and injured dozens of students who were protesting peacefully inside their own institution.

Many of us have now taken shelter in the UNRWA headquarters. We are asking for UNRWA protection for the youth who are protesting in the Gaza Strip now. **We ask too that the international community recognize our rights as human being to freedom, equality and safety whether under Hamas or PA rule, as well as under occupation or as citizens of Israel.**

We lived through the first Intifada, the second intifada, the blockade and the Israeli occupation. Is that not enough for us to justly demand to live a better life and secure a better future? We, the youth, are more than 65% of the population here. We should have the right to decide who leads us and to decide that our political division must end and soon. We demand the right to free and fair elections observed by international monitors.

We ask that the US, UK, European, and Arab governments immediately call our two governments in West bank and Gaza and ask them to please listen to the voice of the people, the voice of youth. Our full list of demands are below:

**We call on the governments of the West Bank and Gaza to respond to the legitimate demands of the people:**

**1 - The release all political detainees in the prisons of the PA and Hamas 2 - The end of all forms of media campaigns against each other.3 - The resignation of the governments of Haniyeh and Fayyad to re-build a government of national unity agreed by all Palestinian factions representing the Palestinian people.4 - The restructuring of the Palestine Liberation Organization to contain all the Palestinian factions and get back to its initial aim: Palestine's freedom from illegal occupation. 5 - The announcement of the freeze of negotiations until the full compatibility between the various Palestinian factions on a political program.6 - The end of all forms of security coordination with Israeli occupation forces.7 - The organization of presidential and parliamentary elections simultaneously in the time chosen by all the factions .**

To contact the protesters, please call:

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Or call UNRWA Headquarters in Gaza at (+ 972 8) 288 7333

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