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PRESS RELEASE

In Solidarity with Palestine and Calling for Immediate Ceasefire and Urgent Humanitarian Action in Gaza

The Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM) stands in solidarity with the people of Palestine and our fellow colleagues at the Palestine Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR). The suffering and loss that Palestinians have endured for decades is severely unjust and the recent escalation of violence is a painful reminder of the urgent need for a peaceful resolution to this conflict. Deeply disturbed about the clear and unchecked violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law that the world is witnessing, we denounce the unprecedented crisis of humanity wrought upon the Occupied Palestinian Territories by Israel.

The atrocious bombardment across Gaza since 7th October 2023 has tragically killed more than 10,000 Palestinians, including more than 4,000 children as of 6th November 2023. Targeting of civilians, hospitals, schools, cultural objects, places of worship, refugee camps, humanitarian vehicles, personnel and facilities is a brazen breach of international law. The ongoing suffocating siege imposed on more than 2 million Palestinians and the continuing loss of civilian lives in Gaza is a dire humanitarian tragedy. The reports on the use of white phosphorus, a chemical weapon that causes serious and long-term injuries, on the densely populated areas in Gaza is painfully distressing. The taking of civilian hostages and the reports on torture and ill-treatment of them are insufferable. Furthermore, the rapid escalation of insecurity and violence in Occupied West Bank is concerning.

Over a million people have been displaced from their homes, and forced to seek shelter in schools, hospitals, courtyards, parking lots, tents and in the streets. Severe overcrowding in these spaces have resulted in an increase in respiratory infections and viral diseases and there are concerns of dehydration and water borne diseases due to water consumption from unsafe sources. In addition, hits on three sewage pipelines in Gaza city poses an imminent threat of sewage flooding which will undoubtedly escalate the current predicament of the Palestinian people.

The stern restrictions on essential resources including food, fuel, clean water, electricity, telecommunication and internet services are severely impacting the everyday lives of civilians. Humanitarian response to the crisis is critically hindered and humanitarian organizations have also voiced serious concerns over the challenges in reaching the most vulnerable in North Gaza. Concerns also are raised over strict restrictions on access to Gaza by journalists and international organizations, including the International Criminal Court (ICC).





Denouncing the atrocities being committed in Occupied Palestine Territories and the callous disregard of humanitarian and human rights principles and obligations, we demand an **immediate and unconditional ceasefire** to prevent any further loss of civilian lives and to allow safe and sustained humanitarian access. We demand the application of international law, to the letter and spirit, in ensuring **civilian protection** and other **protected categories of humanitarian assistance** at all times. We call to ensure **the unimpeded supply of fuel** to Gaza, which is vital for essential functioning and provision of uninterrupted health care services and **unhindered access to other vital supplies**. Furthermore, we call for **unconditional and unfettered access to humanitarian aid and access to and from Gaza for humanitarian organizations, international organizations, journalists and health care workers**. In addition, we call for the **unconditional release of all civilian hostages** being illegally held captive, and demand that their safety, wellbeing and humane treatment is ensured in compliance with international law with immediate effect.

We also call upon the respective international bodies to carry out **independent and unobstructed investigations into the war crimes and violations of international law** to ensure accountability and respect for humanity. **Addressing the root cause** of the conflict, including the occupation of Palestinian territories, and the **strict observance of international law** is crucial to afford the right to self-determination, sustainable peace and stability for Palestinians.

We laud the humanitarian response of the health care workers, the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other humanitarians who are selflessly putting their lives at risk without respite in attending to victims of this crisis. We acknowledge the dauntless diligence of the Palestine Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) in defending the human rights of the Palestinians. We commend the courageous efforts by journalists on the ground conveying the harsh reality of Gaza to the world. We voice our gratitude to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners and other international human rights and humanitarian organizations rendering humanitarian assistance in as well as outside the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We are deeply saddened by the unparalleled deaths in line of duty of human rights and humanitarian workers, journalists and healthcare workers and their families who have themselves sustained colossal losses by targeted attacks and we stand in solidarity with them.

We acknowledge the firm and principled stance taken by the Government of Maldives in the international arena in line with human rights and humanitarian values, calling on the international community to use all possible measures to stop the ongoing inhumane attacks and to ensure the opening of humanitarian pathways. The Human Rights Commission of the Maldives stands united with the people of Palestine, with unconditional support to the pursuit of their inalienable human rights. We reiterate our heartfelt hope for swift and effective actions to alleviate the suffering and pave the way for a future of lasting peace and stability and the attainment of the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

