

Statement to the United Nations Security Council

Israeli restriction put women and children in Gaza Strip at risk

February 4, 2008

The World YWCA is gravely concerned about the siege over the Gaza Strip, particularly its impact on Palestinian women and children who continue to suffer disproportionately as border crossings remain closed. “The situation is very alarming, and getting worse every hour,” Mira Rizek, General Secretary of the YWCA of Jerusalem said today “as the weather deteriorates and amidst an expected snowstorm, I am afraid human loss will increase.”

Yesterday, UNICEF reported its concern over risk of malnutrition among children in Gaza should the siege continue. “The situation of children and mothers is already alarming, many reports confirm that women and children have been the major victims of this siege, violence against women has also been reported,” Rizek emphasised.

Addressing sexual and other forms of violence against women is crucial. Women are often the primary care givers in Palestinian families and are responsible for the home, care of children, the elderly and those in poor health. As such, gender-responsive humanitarian actions must take into account the special needs of women and children.

The serious nature of the daily human rights violations that arise as a result of the siege in Gaza has tremendous psychological impact, both on women and the children and families they care for. We are saddened that, this week, efforts for a UN Security Council statement on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip have been abandoned.

Therefore,

1. We call upon the UN Security Council to resume its efforts today and take urgent practical measures to end the crisis situation in the Gaza Strip and to ensure that women’s needs, voices and perspectives are integrated in the resolution of this situation in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the commitments of the Beijing Platform Declaration for Action.
2. We call upon the members of the international community in all arenas to urgently intervene to bring a halt to this collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza and to contribute in alleviating the humanitarian crisis.
3. We call on the Israeli government to immediately end the siege in the Gaza Strip and reopen border crossings in order to allow humanitarian goods to reach the civilian population.

The World YWCA is a global movement that reaches 25 million women and girls in 125 countries, providing them with the space and skills to develop leadership to achieve justice, peace, security, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment for the entire community. The World YWCA affirms that women’s human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

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