



18 May 2018

JOINT STATEMENT by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC)

UN Human Rights Council 28th special session (18 May 2018)
General Debate

Mr President,

We deeply regret the continuing failure of diplomatic efforts to condemn Israel's entrenched and expanding military occupation of Palestine.

We deplore the mass killings and excessive and disproportionate use of force by the Israeli occupation forces against peaceful Palestinian demonstrators in Gaza on 14 May 2018, and over the previous six-week period since the commencement of the "Great March of Return".

Demonstrators were not only calling for the right of return, but also for an end to the crippling, eleven-year blockade under appalling conditions imposed by Israel. The unilateral recognition by the USA of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the subsequent moving of its embassy in clear violation of international law has only fueled tensions and triggered legitimate protests from Palestinians.

The active participation of women in the peaceful protests and the grave number of women that have been injured and disproportionately impacted by the violence must be highlighted.

The mass atrocities of the past six weeks have placed unimaginable pressure on the medical facilities in Gaza, which are completely under-equipped to cope with the scale of casualties.

We call on Member States of the Council to:

- Address the ongoing impunity of Israel by urgently establishing an independent International Commission of Inquiry to investigate all violations of IHL and international human rights law linked to the killing of, and violence against, Palestinian civilians in the context of the peaceful protests;
- Demand that Israel facilitate the immediate provision of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip, end its crippling blockade, and respect the human rights of Palestinians.

Finally, we urge all States to seek criminal accountability for Israel's violations, including by requesting the International Criminal Court (ICC) to open an investigation. I thank you.