

Letter from Palestinian human rights organisations to the Palestinian political parties and factions involved in the Cairo diplomatic talks

Leaders and representatives of Palestinian political factions, parties, and movements,

Based on our faith in our national, moral, and legal responsibility and recognising our duty to work towards building and strengthening the democratic edifice of the prospective Palestinian State – which must be grounded on political, intellectual and cultural pluralism; on the principle of peaceful succession of power; on promotion of the values of justice, equity, tolerance, and equality; on respect for human rights and freedoms; on the right of all Palestinians to security and safety; and on application of the rule of law without any undue discrimination – we, the undersigned Palestinian human rights organisations, hereby and articulate our demands of the Palestinian political authorities for measures to be taken in order to overcome the pains and agonies of the crisis generated by internal fragmentation and conflict.

We appreciate the Palestinian political factions' recourse to the principle of dialogue and peaceful settlement as an approach to solving and exterminating disputes. Not only have they jeopardised our national cause and legitimate right to self-determination, but the contentions of recent times have also exerted an adverse, destructive impact on individual Palestinian rights. Due to infringements and violations, these rights have witnessed a sharp setback that has effectively rendered them meaningless. Innumerable human rights have been breached during the period of internal division, including the right to life; the right to physical safety and security; the right to immunity against arbitrary detention, torture, inhuman, cruel and degrading treatment or punishment; the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the right to participation in political life; the right to employment in the public service; the right to freedom of association; as well as other rights that have been divested of their inclusive content. In both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, one's ability to enjoy and exercise these fundamental human rights has been contingent on political and partisan affiliation.

Undoubtedly, political and intellectual disagreements, and divergence of opinion, are the essence and spirit of democracy. They are a positive indicator of how advanced the social, cultural, and intellectual mobility is in a society. Intellectual and political differences and debates have been a source of pride for all Palestinians over the decades. Multiple intellectual and political opinions, beliefs and tendencies are an embodiment of deep-rooted awareness and faith in Palestinian tradition of free expression. Unfortunately, however, we have deviated from this approach. We have inclined towards intellectual unilateralism as well as adopting policies of alienation and rejection of the other. We have further invoked force and violence as a tool to impose particular measures, thereby adversely impacting our national interests. Moreover, citizens' rights and freedoms have been at the mercy of political debates. Individual rights and freedoms have been valueless; whether they exist or not is weighed by political affiliation.

As Palestinian human rights organisations, and as we renew our support of the current dialogue which we regard as the only avenue towards Palestinian unity, we do hope that all participants in the Cairo Summit consider seriously the tragedies and atrocities generated by internal political divisions. To move forward from this painful era in a sensible and objective manner, the following measures must be approved and implemented:

- Full apologies to be offered victims and their families, as well as reparations for damage and pain inflicted on them as a result of the violation of their rights and freedoms, including all acts of murder, torture, arbitrary detention,

and other encroachments on human rights and freedoms safeguarded by the Palestinian Basic Law.

- Apologies to be offered to the Palestinian people as a whole for the atrocities committed. Murder, destruction, and sabotage caused to Palestinian people, institutions and properties have negatively affected the development, and progress of our citizens' lives. All Palestinians, not a single faction or group, are duly entitled to these resources.
- Pursuance of accountability in order to ensure that no leader, official, or individual who ordered or perpetrated any crimes or violations of human rights and freedoms is immune from punishment or benefits from a policy of impunity. Anyone convicted for the perpetration of such crimes should be removed from any political or security position in the Palestinian National Authority.
- The establishing of an independent, impartial committee to investigate all crimes and encroachments committed throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The committee will have a clear mandate and comprise persons with relevant professional experience.

Accountability and prosecution of perpetrators of crimes and violations of Palestinian rights and freedoms is the sole measure that can prevent the repeated invocation of violence and desire to take revenge for reported atrocities.

Respectfully yours,

- Al-Haq
- Al-Mezan Centre for Human Rights
- Al-Quds Centre for Legal Aid and Human Rights
- ADDAMEER Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association
- AL-DAMEER Association for Human Rights
- Defence for Children International – Palestine Section
- Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling
- INSAN Association
- Ramallah Centre for Human Rights Studies